

The Teaching Professor Conference Report

By: Dr. Rigoberto Chinchilla

Dates: June 6 and June 7

Place: Washington DC. Marriott Wardman Park Hotel

Since I started to teach, I have been fascinated with the idea of constantly improving in order to maximize student learning. I love to teach, teaching makes me feel energized. There is no higher desire in my mind but to improve and improve my teaching methods and to explore the relationship of my teaching methods with an effective learning.

My objectives of attending the teaching-professor conference were:

- To learn new pedagogical practices that work from a group of the most respected teaching- professors in the country
- To learn new relevant pedagogical research from the best teaching and learning experts with national and international reputation
- To be inspired by a group of colleagues with the same commitment to teaching in order to maintain my teaching principles fresh and invigorated
- To establish a permanent network of colleagues around the country in order to have a continuous support after the conference
- To contribute to the assessment, curriculum improvement and accreditation in our school, our college and the university in general

My plan of action is:

- To take a hard look to all my courses and incorporate the principles learned in the conference in order to improve my teaching methods
- To publish in my Website and in the Faculty Development Website (upon your permission) a summary of all my findings, electronic materials and key ideas of the teaching professor conference
- To give presentations about the conference to my colleagues in my department, my college and at a general level
- To relate those principles to teaching ONLINE

Cordially

Dr. Rigo Chinchilla

Summary of Workshops attended:

JUNE 6: 9.15 AM – 10.30 AM

“Interactive, Learner-Centered Method of Teaching”

Presenters:

- *Salar Alsaldary & Phyllis Blumberg: University of the Sciences*

Summary: “This presentation defined and described each of the five dimension components that need to change in order to implement learned-centered teaching. To further understand these components some cases of study were analyzed to determine the learned-centered characteristics that should be implemented in typical courses. The case of study presented uses student-assisted learning involving peer teaching and interactive discussions of content and requires students to do a presentation on relevant course content at a professional meeting. The participant discussed how they might adapt the type of teaching described in the case of study to their own courses” [1]

Workshop notes/comments

The function of Content dimension: The instructor encourages students to transform and reflect on most of the content to make their own meaning out of it and frames/organizes content so students can learn additional content that is not taught

- Varied uses of content
 - Know why they need to learn content
 - Acquire discipline-specific learning methodologies such as how to read primary source material
 - Practice using inquiry or ways of thinking in the discipline
 - Learn to solve real world problems

The role of the instructor dimension: The instructor explicitly, coherently, and consistently aligns objectives, teaching or learning methods and assessment methods. The instructor intentionally uses various teaching methods that are appropriate for student learning goals. Instructor articulates SMART objectives

- S: Specific M: measurable A: Attainable R: relevant T: time oriented

- Creation of an environment for learning through
 - Organization and use of materials
 - Accommodate different learning styles
- Alignment of course components
 - Objectives
 - teaching/learning methods
 - assessment methods for consistency

The responsibility Learning Dimension: The instructor provides increasing opportunities for students to assume responsibility for their own learning, leading to achievement of stated learning outcomes. The instructor also motivates students to routinely and appropriately assess their own learning and be proficient in literacy skills

- Learning to learn skills for the present and the future
 - Time management
 - Self-monitoring
 - Goal setting
 - How to do independent reading
 - How to conduct original research
- Self Directed, lifelong learning skills
 - Determining a personal need to know more
 - Knowing who to ask or where to seek information
 - Determining when need is met and
 - Development of self-awareness of student's own learning abilities
- Student self-assessment of their learning/strengths and weaknesses
 - Writing ability
 - Ability to lead or work in groups
 - Ability to handle large or independent assignments
- Information literacy Skills
 - Framing questions, Accessing resources, evaluating resources, evaluating content and using information legally

The process and purposes of Assessment dimension: Instructor integrates assessment within the learning process (formative and constructive). The instructor offers student many opportunities to learn from their mistakes and then demonstrate mastery. Instructor and student mutually agree on a timeframe for feedback

- Peer and self assessment
- Assessment within the learning process
- Peer and self assessment
- Timeframe for feedback
- Justification of the accuracy of the answers

The balance of power (control issues) dimension: Instructor largely determines course content and encourages students to explore additional content independently or through projects. Instructor encourages expressing alternative perspectives when appropriate.

- Flexibility of course policies, assessment methods, learning methods and deadlines
- Instructor use contract grading

JUNE 6: 10.45 AM – 12:00 PM

“Online classroom Redesign with Social Networking Tools”

Presenter:

- *Mary Hricko , Kent Sate University*

Summary: “This presentation provided an overview of how educators can use social networking tools for teaching and learning. It also illustrates how features in social networking tools can enhance student collaboration, interaction, and content creation. For an illustration, the presenter detailed how NING (a social networking tool) was used to develop an ONLINE classroom for an instructional technology course. She described the design, development, and delivery of the course and offer as assessment of using the application instead of a courseware product” [1]

Workshop notes/comments

- Social network sites are dynamic Web 2.0 platforms that can be used for teaching, learning, and research activities
- These applications offer a myriad of collaborative features for generating content and fostering interactive communication
- Tools like WebCT limit the student content creation
 - Most student know how to use social network applications
 - Most of them have positive experiences with social networking tools
 - Applications work best with different teaching styles: Easy to customize
 - The extensive features often exceeds tools like WebCT
- The presenter gave an example of how to use NING (social network software) to develop his course from scratch
- Professional Rubrics (i.e. Quality matters) should be used by the instructor to build the site properly

Some issues with these tools

- Establish security and privacy parameters
- Determine content parameters for students pages
- Customize tabs for course needs
- Determine how Web 2.0 apps can be used
 - BLOG
 - RSS
 - AUDIO/VIDEO
 - CHAT/CONFERENCING
 - FORUMS

Face-to-Face Vs. computer-mediated communication

- Place dependence
- Time dependence
- Structure of communication
 - Computer communication is more structured
- Richness of communication
 - Face-to-Face offers more richness in communication

JUNE 6: 2.15 PM – 3.30 PM

“Interactive Case of Studies in Online Education”

Presenter:

- *Neil Desnoyers, Drexel University*

Summary:” Case of studies, and the class discussions they generate, are a demonstrated means of engaging students in live classroom situations. This session will provide details of a method developed to create interactive case of studies for an online learning environment that fosters the development and critique of arguments by and among students. The class discussion portion of a case of study exercise commonly utilized in the case of study methodology for face-to-face classes is, the presenter believes, where much of the learning from case of studies occurs. This is due to the fact that students are forced to critique other’s arguments and in the process further develop their own arguments. The presenter has developed a method to bring this critique into an ONLINE learning environment and will demonstrate it in this session” [1]

Workshop notes/comments

Student Involvement in the case studies follows a two-phase cycle

Phase one:

- a) All students in the course, as an assignment, are asked to read the case of study and prepare an analysis – the type of analysis that is customary with case of studies. They are asked to defend an analysis/argument using the information in the case study and additional research. Each student in the course submits their analysis to the course instructor
- b) The course instructor then grades each student’s submission as would take place for a normal HW assignment
- c) The Course instructor then reviews all the submissions and selects a small quantity of submissions that will form the basis of Phase two of the cycle – The ONLINE discussion. The selected ones are not necessarily the best ones

Phase two

- a) The course instructor posts the selected submissions anonymously to an ONLINE discussion site.
- b) The entire class is then given instructions to critique and respond to each of the five submissions. This has proven to be very beneficial for the students

Then a mini-case was provided and analyzed

JUNE 6: 3.55 PM – 5.00 PM

“Using WebQuests for Constructivist Learning”

Presenter:

- *Patricia P. Rubertone, Drexel University*

Summary:” This session will engage participants in constructing a WebQuest, an inquiry oriented activity whereby students access information on the Internet to solve problems. The component parts of a typical WebQuest include an introduction, task, step-by-step process, Internet resources, grading criteria, and conclusion. WebQuests are based on authentic problems using constructivism as a theoretical framework and allow students to actively engage in collaborative and cooperative learning. Using WebQuests as a teaching tool fosters teamwork, an essential skill for problem-Solving in all professional environments” [1]

Workshop notes/comments

A WebQuest is an inquiry-oriented activity in which most or all of the information used by learners is drawn from the web” (Dodge & March as cited by Spanfelner, 2000 p.24)

- The real task is to motivate students to investigation: Real, Relevant and Rich
- Develops critical Thinking Skills
 - Non-Linearly designed assignments
 - Non-routine thinking
 - Alternatives must be weighed and assessed
- Higher order, deep thinking : Analysis, Synthesis and evaluation
- Collaborative learning
- Each student assumes a role that helps team members to investigate an issue from a more specialized perspective
- Learners construct knowledge out of their experiences
- Information explosion (takes a lot of time)
 - Access information
 - Find resources
 - Evaluate the plethora of information
- Scaffold learning
 - Temporary support on framework for learning
 - Assist novices in understanding what is needed to accomplish a task

- WebQuest components
 - Introduction
 - Task
 - Process
 - Evaluation
 - Conclusion

Introduction

- Sets the stage for the learning experience
- Provides some background information
- Should “grab” the learner

Task

- Should clearly describe the project
- Doable and Interesting
- 3 R’s: Rich, Relevant, Real

Process

- Step-by-Step description of how to accomplish the task
- Typically will have various roles/parts for student to carry out

Resources:

- Provide “scaffold” for learning by providing internet resources for students
- Helps to narrow and direct student’s searches
- Tips for better searching

Evaluation

- Grading criteria
- Useful to include early in the WebQuest so that students know expectations

Conclusion:

- Brings closure to the Quest
- Reinforces the learners what they have learned

Litmus test for WebQuest

1. Could the answer be copied and pasted?
2. Does the task require students to create something new out of what they learned?

JUNE 7: 9.15 AM – 10:30 AM

“Enriching the Classroom Environment with CEE: Connection, Engagement, and Empowerment!”

Presenter:

- *Dave Yearwood, University of North Dakota*

Summary:” Students who have grown up in a time of significant technological development often believe that they can do it all and have it all if they can only learn to be efficient multi-taskers. However, dividing one’s attention between several tasks may be inefficient, result in no single activity being completed in the best possible manner, and may well lead to frustration and/or cognitive overload. This session will explore how to connect with students by gaining their interest, which will make students more inclined to engage at multiple levels- With the instructor, with their peers, and with the content. The outcome of this engagement will result in an experience for students that is not only liberating but also empowering” [1]

Workshop notes/comments

In my opinion this was the best workshop of the conference. The trilogy CONNECT-ENGAGE-EMPOWER was fully explained

- Gaining someone’s interests is essential in establishing some connection with them but how can faculty better connect with students and what may be required to bring this about?
- Many individuals talk about the need for engagement but what factors work to increase or reduce engagement?
- What are the ways that educators could achieve empowerment as a result of the connection they make with students and the engagement that they promote?

Establish Connection

- Call them by their name
- Use something they know or are interested in
- Tell them about yourself
- Use variety break the monotony

- Greet them personally
- Use the connection with content of previous class
- Use the “b” key (black) when using PowerPoint

The challenge for faculty may be finding relevant and meaningful activities by which they can not only connect with student but frequently re-connect to ensure continued engagement

Working for engagement at multiple levels

- With the instructor
- With the content
- With peers

Engage students

- use software
- Use toolkits
- Use cmap tools : <http://cmap.ihmc.us/conceptmap.html>

Making connection with students create opportunities for engagement and purposeful engagement will likely result in a better dialogue about course materials at a level of synthesis and application

Creating opportunities for Empowering Students

- Allow students opportunities to demonstrate what they know, understand, and can do at some identifiable point in the semester that they could not at the beginning of the semester
 - Assessment core at the end
- Using an alternative assessment method to promote a sense of empowerment
- Give students the opportunity to solve a disciplinary specific problem

Over- all DO NOT LOWER STANDARDS

JUNE 7: 10.45 AM – 12:00 PM

“Actively Engage your Students”

Presenter:

- *Alice Cassidy, University of British Columbia*

Summary: “Direct involvement with the material and processes of a course helps students meet intended learning objectives. This is true for any discipline and also considers diverse interest, backgrounds, and preferred learning styles of students (and Teachers!). In this session, the presenter will model examples of activities and techniques to actively engage learners in the classroom and other settings” [1]

Workshop notes/comments

Engage your students, empower them!

- Break the ICE : Goggle icebreaker
- Include reflective writing: Even if it is not shared
- Let students start some classes
- Have “fill in the blank” in your PP slides/ Keep them active
- End the course the way you started ... On the topic
- Require a “ticket-to-class” to ensure pre-reading
- Find a relevant clip in “you-tube”
- Create assignments that help the community
- Hear your student voices in every class
- Think “pair-square-Share (two –then four)
- Create an advisory team for your course using alumni

Creativity and active learning go “hand in hand”

Recommended book “Seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education” Zelda Gamson

End of Conference and Objectives reached

Conference adjourned at 1 p.m. From 12:00 to 1:00 PM, Mr. Ricky Cox (Co-chair of the conference) shared his perspective of the conference—“new ideas, new strategies, interesting questions, and good examples of what we have learned in our time together”. A discussion was open for others to share reactions, questions, lessons learned, concerns and hopes for the future. Students participating in the conference were used in the process.

Percentage of Objectives reached after the conference:

- To learn new pedagogical practices that work from a group of the most respected teaching- professors in the country (90%)
- To learn new relevant pedagogical research from the best teaching and learning experts with national and international reputation (90%)
- To be inspired by a group of colleagues with the same commitment to teaching in order to maintain my teaching principles fresh and invigorated (100%)
- To establish a permanent network of colleagues around the country in order to have a continuous support after the conference (40%)
- To contribute to the assessment, curriculum improvement and accreditation in our school, our college and the university in general (This is for the future)

Sources:

[1] “The teaching Professor Conference 2009 Program” June 5-7, 2009 Marriott Wardman Park Hotel. Washington, D.C.