

Fall 2014



# Teaching and Learning Fall 2014 Newsletter

## Transfer of Learning Across the University and Beyond

By Dana Driscoll, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Writing and Rhetoric  
Recipient of 2013-2014 ~ Teaching Excellence Award, Tenure Track

Learning occurs when we access, adapt, and use the knowledge, skills, and approaches acquired in diverse situations. Learning researchers call the process of adapting learning to new circumstances “transfer,” which entails bringing knowledge from prior courses to present studies and in new circumstances.

Transfer is not the immediate and automatic end product of a successful course—it is something learned, explicit, and dynamic. If we want our students to transfer, as educators have to work at it and we have to be willing to meet our students where they are and envision a path to where they are heading. While there are many ways to help facilitate transfer, I’m going to present four today: value, metacognition, connection, and metaeducation.

**Value** is one of the keys to successful transfer. I have found that one of the most effective ways of getting students to care, especially in general education courses, is to get them out of the classroom and into the community. I can get them to care by giving them a problem to solve or a person to help, something that is greater than they are. I also help students care by showing them how what we are learning—through their readings, class discussions—directly works in the real world. Suddenly, a “course I was taking to fulfill writing intensive and knowledge applications” becomes a “course that changed my life.”

I’ve been doing this work recently at the Baldwin Center in Pontiac, MI, where students enrolled in WRT320: Peer Tutoring in Composition tutor at-risk children and adolescents in the community for the first hour of our weekly course. Getting students beyond the classroom walls not only encourages them to build connections, to reflect critically, and to better understand the role of their learning, but also it allows students to make a meaningful difference in others’ lives.

**Metacognition:** Researchers have suggested that higher education should not only teach specific con-

tent but also prepare students for future learning. Metacognitive approaches to learning encourage critical reflection, develop understanding of learning, and allow for self-monitoring and adaptation.

Students often assume that successful learning is fast, easy, and linear, requiring no revision, takes minimal effort, and is always successful on the first attempt. But that’s not reality. Learning is about overcoming struggle and adaptation.

We can help our students successfully transfer by spending time teaching them about how to learn. We can do this by modeling positive metacognitive strategies and demonstrating how we’ve overcome setbacks. I often use myself as a model for my students. I share my article drafts and revisions, about where I seek feedback and how I revise, I talk to them about getting rejected from journals and what I learned from the process, and demonstrate how I self-monitor, manage time, and critically reflect. And through this, I ask my students to do the same and to reflect upon their own learning processes.

I ask them to consider such questions as “How was I successful, and what contributed to that success? Where did I struggle, and what contributed to that struggle?” and “What did I learn from this experience that will go with me?”

**Fostering Connections.** Successful transfer of learning is encouraged by fostering connections between material within a course, among various courses in a sequence, between general education and major coursework, and from university courses to the real world.

While our disciplines provide a framework for deep expertise to develop, disciplinary boundaries also create barriers that students find difficult to negotiate. Likewise, barriers between the univer-

sity and what’s outside (home, work, graduate school, community) can appear insurmountable to students and prevent transfer. By encouraging students to apply material to real world problems (problem-based learning) through community engagement and critical reflection, we can encourage them to transfer learning beyond our courses. By encouraging students to think in interdisciplinary ways, we can break down the barriers that create compartmentalized knowledge, which is difficult to transfer.

**Metaeducation** Is about the function of the university and the role of the curriculum in students’ lives. It’s about the relevancy and importance of a university education—not just the specific courses in a degree, but what the cohesion of all courses and experiences gives. We need to teach students that when they selected a university rather than a technical school, they selected a particular kind of curriculum that included a strong general education component. We need to teach them about how to transfer and to adapt knowledge and skills from courses in history, ecology, writing, biology, philosophy, and music to diverse settings.

To provide this meta-education, faculty members must value our general education courses, teach them with enthusiasm and passion, and demonstrate their importance to students.

**Conclusion.** Transfer of learning is an enormous challenge, but one that we can begin to mediate by emphasizing value, encouraging metacognition, fostering connections, and providing students with a metaeducation about learning in a university context.

### What is Metacognition?

The term metacognition as used by Flavell (1979) refers to an individual’s awareness of his or her cognitive processes and strategies.



# 2015 Teaching Excellence Awards—Call for Nominations

The Senate Teaching and Learning Committee is pleased to announce a call for nominations for the 2015 Teaching Excellence Awards. Two awards will be made: one to a tenured or tenure-track member of the faculty; another to a non-tenure-track faculty at Oakland University. Each award includes a cash stipend and will be presented at the Annual Faculty Recognition Luncheon, tentatively scheduled for mid-April, 2015.

Nominations may be made by any member of the Oakland University community, including students, faculty, alumni, administrators, and staff. Student nominations are a highly valued component of this process. Faculty are encouraged to announce this pro-

cess in all classes. *Faculty may not self-nominate for the Award.*

The letter of nomination should address the nominee's accomplishments based on the following criteria:

- Excellence in teaching methodology
- Innovation in teaching
- Continued growth and development in teaching
- Distinction in the ability to stimulate critical thinking and facilitate student understanding
- Inspiring role model to students
- Exemplary service to students and teaching profession

Nominations will be accepted through **December 8, 2014**. Nomination should be completed online using the online nomination form. The Committee will contact the nominees about how to supply the required materials. Previous Teaching Excellence Award winners and current members of the Teaching and Learning Committee are not eligible. A plaque with the names of previous Teaching Excellence Award winners is on display in the lobby of Kresge Library.

[http://www2.oakland.edu/misc/tea/teaching\\_award.cfm](http://www2.oakland.edu/misc/tea/teaching_award.cfm)

## Fall 2014 Faculty Workshop

*Sponsored by the Teaching & Learning Committee (TLC) & The Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning (CETL)*

**A special session highlighting and celebrating the teaching excellence of our 2014 Teaching Award winners.**

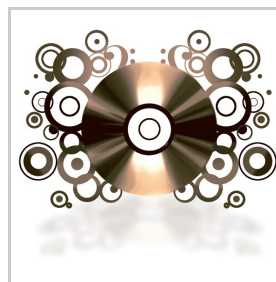
**Dana Driscoll, PhD., Assoc. Prof. of Writing & Rhetoric ~ Teaching Excellence Award, Tenure Track**

**Vanessa Stauffer, MFA, Ph.D., Special Lecturer, English ~ Excellence in Teaching Award, Non-Tenure Track**

**WHEN: November 12, 2014 12:00—1:30**

**WHERE: 200A Elliot Hall (The Learning Lab) \*Lunch will be provided**

*Come and hear their stories and learn tips on how they engage, inspire and connect with students.*



## THE SENATE TEACHING AND LEARNING COMMITTEE 2014-2015

Holka, Kim (SON) 2013-2015 **CO-CHAIR**

Walwema, Josie (CAS) 2013-2015

Carver, Cynthia (SEHS) 2013-2016

Cheezum, Rebecca (SHS) 2013-2016 **CO-CHAIR**

Dereski, Mary (SOM) 2013-2016

Greer, Katie (KL) 2013-2016

Isken, Mark (SEHS) 2014-2017

Woerner, Ali (CAS) 2014-2017

Freed, Joanne (CAS) 2014-2017

Dekovich, Allyson (Student) 2014-

Baszczuk, Kayla (Student) 2014-2015

Laux, Andrew (Student) 2014-2015

Southward, Michelle (AP Assembly) 2012-2015

Bongers, Nic (AP Assembly) 2013-2015

Ableser, Judy, 2014-2015 ex-officio and non-voting



## The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning:

Let's Highlight the Learning , Judy Ableser, PhD

Albert Einstein hit the mark when he said "I never teach my pupils. I only attempt to provide the conditions in which they can learn." What are those conditions? What do each of us do to facilitate learning in our courses? The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) at Oakland University explores this on a regular basis by providing supports and services to all faculty/instructors to help them enhance successful student learning. Rather than focusing on the "teaching" in teaching and learning our goal is to focus on the learning!

The mission of The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) at Oakland University is twofold: To support faculty efforts to improve teaching by creating learning environments in which our diverse student body achieves maximal learning potential, and to promote a culture throughout the university which values and rewards effective teaching, and respects and supports individual differences among learners. CETL works with the Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning (TLC) by actualizing the values and importance of excellence in teaching and learning across campus. The TLC recognizes and awards excellence in teaching and learning. CETL provides the support and services to enhance teaching/learning in order to earn one of those awards. CETL provides consultations, workshops, informal coffee and conversations, virtual training, teaching grants and travel grants to teaching conferences, scholarship of teaching and learning, mentoring and additional numerous supports.

CETL is located in the 200 Suites of Elliott Hall. Visit our website at [www.oakland.edu/ctl](http://www.oakland.edu/ctl) to see all our services /supports and to register for our programs. We want to be virtually accessible to all faculty and instructors in order to reach a wider population so check out our on-line training, recordings of our workshop and online resources and documents on our site.

### Oakland University & University of Windsor 9<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference on Teaching and Learning



## Educational Leadership

May 13-14, 2015 University of Windsor

Visit <http://www1.uwindsor.ca/ctl/windsor-oakland> for CFP updates

## 2015 Educational Development Grants:

### CALL FOR PROPOSALS

The Senate charge to the Teaching and Learning Committee is "to promote the teaching and the learning process." In accordance with this charge, the Committee invites the Oakland University faculty and staff to apply for grants in educational development. Funding may be requested for projects whose primary purpose involves one or more of the following:

- Development and/or use of new teaching techniques.
- Development of a new instructional approach.
- Faculty development related to curricular responsibilities.
- Investigation of a teaching/learning problem.
- Evaluation of a method of teaching.

Individual awards will not normally exceed \$750. Student labor in conjunction with preparation of teaching materials may be funded. The Committee will not fund preparation for accreditation or program reviews nor will it fund faculty salaries or travel costs. The cost of food, food services and photocopies will not be funded. The grant is not intended to support the purchase of software or hardware unless it is incidental to the development of the educational process.

The deadline for application is 5:00 PM  
Monday, March 23 2015

Completed applications should be emailed to Joanne L. Freed [[freed@oakland.edu](mailto:freed@oakland.edu)]

The form should be downloaded from the Teaching & Learning Committee website, filled out electronically and sent as an attachment. Additionally, the electronic version must be followed by an identical, signed hard copy sent via campus mail to

Joanne L. Freed 540 O'Dowd Hall. This hard copy of the application requires the signature of the department or unit head. The due date for the signed, hard copy is also 5:00 PM, Monday, March 23 2015.

Each award recipient must file a final report at the conclusion of the project describing its purpose, activities and outcomes. The reports are due by September 1, 2015. Questions and comments may be directed to Joanne L. Freed [[freed@oakland.edu](mailto:freed@oakland.edu)]

<http://www.oakland.edu/TLCcommittee>

## A Momentary Stay

by : Vanessa Stauffer, MFA, PhD, Department of English

I consider teaching to be akin to writing poetry—more specifically, to making metaphor. A quick definition: a metaphor is a comparison between an unknown and a known quantity. By accessing our knowledge of the known thing, we carry its qualities to the unknown, applying a set of particulars to an abstraction in order to, for an instant of insight, hold it still. The action of a good metaphor is swift, simultaneously involving the logical mind, past experience, and emotion. As Robert Frost writes in “The Figure a Poem Makes,” a poem ends in wisdom—a “momentary stay against confusion.” Conceived of in this way, a poem enacts the experience of coming into knowledge. I define learning as the continual process of coming into knowledge.

In a successful learning situation, students first acquire information (important definitions, concepts, facts), practice and explore that material, and are then confronted by a challenging task that requires them to apply it. If the task is too easy or too difficult, learning does not happen. Students must be confronted by a gap in their understanding, a silence or a white space.

Essentially, they must enter the space of metaphor and make the cognitive leap between what is known and what is unknown. If they do not struggle—if the instructor bridges that gap for

them—they do not learn. Instead, they acquire another fact: Prof. X’s interpretation of a specific line. While such acquisition is the critical first step towards learning, the student who remains dependent on it never achieves what I consider to be the goal of instruction: autonomy.

Because the struggle towards autonomy leaves the student vulnerable—open to criticism and the possibility that he will fail—the instructor’s role is twofold: to be simultaneously authoritative and authentic. As an authority, the instructor affirms the importance of her subject, motivating the student to make that difficult leap by endorsing its value both to the individual student and to the discipline or culture. Secondly, the instructor must be authentic, someone who can be trusted not merely because she stands behind the lectern as an expert, but because she is perceived as being open and honest. If the instructor is unwilling to acknowledge the difficulty inherent in autonomy—to model not only mastery, but difficulty—the student is unlikely to be persuaded by her suggestion that he seek it for himself.

The ideal proportion between authority and authenticity is unique to every class and changes over the course of the semester, requiring continuous assessment of what’s working and what’s not. Do students have a

sound grasp of the fundamentals? Are they too intimidated by the task? Or, conversely, are they bored—have I not challenged them sufficiently?

I utilize various assessments so I can make adjustments, as well as to give students their own sense of their progress and encourage their autonomy; ideally, they learn to self-assess. Some assessments come from a place of authority (quizzes, exams, projects submitted for marks). Others are not formal assessments but forms of self-assessment derived from the pursuit of autonomy. Class discussion, for instance, gives students an opportunity to articulate individual responses to a text and compare them to those of their peers.

Similarly, workshop discussions allow a young poet to essentially overhear his readers’ reactions and decide whether his poem is accomplishing what he intends. I encourage authenticity in discussion by modeling it myself; if I don’t think I have a good reading of a line, for instance, I’ll say so.

I have found that students respond favorably to not-knowing, as it affirms that our work is sometimes difficult. More importantly, it allows them to offer answers of their own, encouraged to make that leap into the space of the unknown out of a sense that we are all in the conversation together.

# LEARN

# TEACH



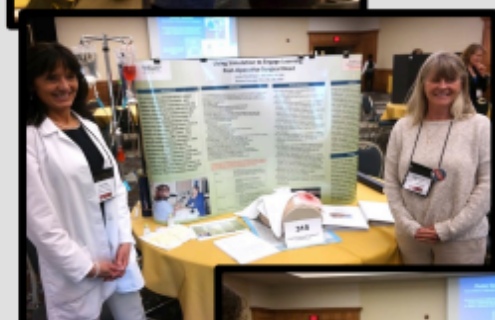
The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning presents

OAKLAND  
UNIVERSITY

# Instructional Fair



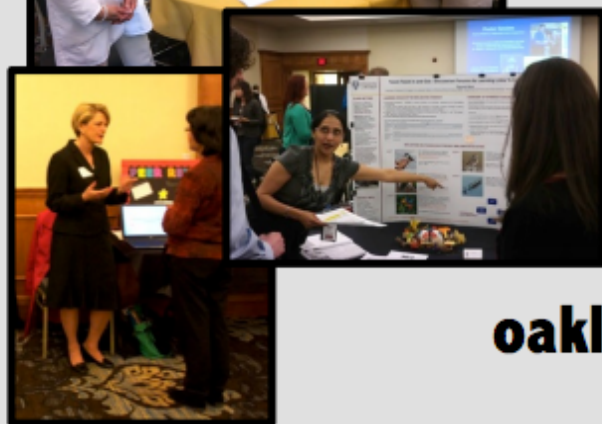
Share with faculty an effective instructional strategy, active learning technique, classroom activity or assessment that you use to promote student success.



**Wednesday, January 21**

**2:00-4:00 p.m.**

Learning Studio, 200A Elliott Hall  
Refreshments provided.



To learn more about the event, review past instructional fair teaching strategies, and submit a one-page proposal, visit

**[oakland.edu/instructionalfair](http://oakland.edu/instructionalfair)**

**Proposals Due: Friday, November 14**

Classroom  
Strategies

Online  
Teaching  
Strategies

Tech Tool  
Strategies

Based on these three tracks, each OU faculty creates a display or interactive demonstration, along with a one-page handout, of an effective strategy in order to discuss and share ideas with colleagues across the disciplines.