

SUBJECT: A COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS

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My colleague Chris Jansen, who does the layout for *Reaching Through Teaching*, and I were talking about a cover for this edition. Because the articles deal with so many innovations in teaching, I wanted a cover that depicted “change.” Chris is both artistic and creative, whereas I am only creative. I asked him to think about a cover with coins depicted in the foreground and with a tsunami bearing down on the change in the background. He created the cover you now see (sans a part of my creativity).

How can we engage students in the learning process during a time when they are bombarded by information and social institutions that are continuously hit by waves of change? The freshmen on our campuses are not naive 18 year olds who passively wait for knowledge to be poured into their heads. They are not unaware of what is taking place around them. Our students are adults, despite their ages, who want an education and who realize that an education means more than memorizing a text and course notes. An education means thinking and doing and understanding.

The changes that are occurring in higher education are at once both exciting and frightening. We are expected to change not only what we teach, but how we teach. The articles in this edition of *RTT* engage us as we consider new ways of thinking and learning. The writers, many of whom recently presented their work at the Georgia Conference on Teaching and Learning, discuss the changes they have made in their content areas, processes and pedagogies. They engage us with their words, ideas and personalities. Jeff Gutliph and Donna Schlossenberg, for example, humorously focus on the process they experienced to enhance online teaching. Don't look here for a discussion of the technology they use, go to their web-site for a hands-on primer. Several other authors point you to web-sites with valuable educational material. Not only has teaching changed, but the means for disseminating information have changed tremendously. We are members of both face-to-face learning communities and virtual, asynchronous learning communities.

Change in faculty development opportunities was spurred by one of the Chancellor's initiatives in 1994. Budget redirection and teaching and learning grants have encouraged teachers to experiment with new technologies, techniques and curricula. The workshops and programs we now conduct on campus accommodate around 800 participants, the state-wide teaching conference supports the discussion of ideas between 300 faculty members, and *Reaching Through Teaching* allows us to share innovations in education. Colleagues throughout the university system

have collaborated in these exchanges of knowledge. Many of my friends at KSU volunteered to conduct workshops on technology and other topics four years ago when faculty development workshops were relatively new to our campus. Over the years they have continued to offer their expertise to others. My gratitude extends to Martha, Joe, Chuck, Cathy, John, Bernie, Ameeta, and Vassilis, who are representative of the many faculty members who have shared information with others. I also appreciate the support of Dr. Betty Siegel, KSU's president, who has always encouraged me to experiment and try new and different approaches to faculty development. Whenever she sensed that I was getting an itch to return to full-time teaching, she said “Lana, there is no difference between what you are doing now and what you used to do . . . it is only that your classroom has changed.”

I have also had the good fortune to collaborate and coordinate with colleagues across the state who have contributed their time and energy in the pursuit of excellence in teaching and learning. Although I can name at least one person from every institution in the system with whom I have had the pleasure of working, these are some who stand out in my mind: Pam at Dekalb, Mark at North Georgia, Brad at Clayton, Ulf and Chris at Darton, Trish at UGA, Steve at GaTech, Christine at VSC, Harry at Georgia State, Bobbie at Georgia Southern, Joel at Dalton, and Mary at East Georgia. Jessica and Linda, two colleagues at the USG Central Office, have offered encouragement and support for faculty development endeavors on this and other campuses.

Change is inevitable in our professional lives. I will be moving from my position as the director of the Center for Excellence in Teaching to chair of a new and exciting department on the KSU campus: Sociology, Geography and Anthropology. I've learned an important lesson in this faculty development role during the past four years that has enhanced my teaching and will help me in my new job: collaborate, cooperate and coordinate in order to make a more positive impact on teaching and learning. *