
TEACHING THROUGH RESEARCH — THE VITAL CONNECTION

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Those who follow the trends of higher education would agree that much has been written and discussed about the monumental task facing educators today to “keep current and creative” in their teaching. One important avenue for ensuring that this occurs, is the involvement of teachers in research activities. The bond between teaching and research is a tight one. In fact, Dr. Joseph C. Burke, provost of State University of New York once remarked in an address to faculty at a workshop on “How to Find and Get Federal Grants and Contracts,” that “In an era where knowledge doubles every decade, states and nations will flourish or fail depending upon the availability of professionals who are educated to be innovative, on their continuing access to ideas and information, and on their enduring ability to apply creative approaches to societal problems and possibilities. . . . Success in our modern society depends on an integrated view of teaching, research, and service in our schools of higher education. Discovery is worthless without dissemination in the classroom and the community; and dissemination without discovery merely delivers antiquated ideas and outdated information.”

Many Kennesaw College faculty understand that research is an integral part of the teaching process. Dr. Rosa Bobia is one such example. This past summer she was a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Seminar awardee. Dr. Bobia studied “African Literature

and Criticism” under Dr. Bernth O. Lindfords, at the University of Texas. According to Bobia, the opportunity to be with colleagues who shared the same “passion” and thirst for knowledge of a topic was exhilarating. The course provided an intense, sometimes grueling learning experience under a master scholar. But Dr. Bobia felt that the excellent library resources, the daily interaction with peers and scholars, the exposure to, and exploration of works and criticisms of some of Africa’s leading novelists, playwrights, and poets, and the informal discussions that ensued concerning ways to introduce this information into the curriculum, made the work well worth the effort.

“The summer seminar has directly impacted the courses I teach,” says Bobia. “I have integrated much of what I learned into my language courses. For instance, I want my students to be aware of the presence and location of former French colonies in Africa, as well as introduce them to some of the writers and cultural heritage of these areas, to illustrate how french is used outside of France. The summer seminar was an effective way of blending my research interests and my classroom responsibilities.”

In spite of heavy teaching loads, and personal and professional commitments, other faculty at Kennesaw have recognized the challenge before them. They too, have pursued a variety of avenues for exploring their research interests, motivated by both a personal mission and a sincere sensitivity to the needs of students for a more enlightened perspective.

Dr. Helen Ridley, professor of

political science, is one instructor who values continuing education as evidenced by her participation in numerous seminars, workshops and institutes related to her field including: “Project ’87 Teacher Seminars (For College Teachers), sponsored by the American Political Association and the American Historical Association; three summer seminars on the Constitution; one at the Brookings Institutes, “Judicial Decision Making,” one at the University of Indiana, entitled, “Women and the Constitution,” and one at Duke University, “The Amending Process.” This past summer, Dr. Ridley attended a three week NEH Summer Institute on “Federalism.” When asked what she has gained through her participation in these programs, she responded, “they have kept me current in my field; the latest scholarship was made available to me by the leading scholars in the discipline.” She feels all the seminars have had a direct influence on the classes she teaches and the seminars that both she and her colleagues have conducted for social studies teachers, by way of the knowledge gleaned and resources made available to her.

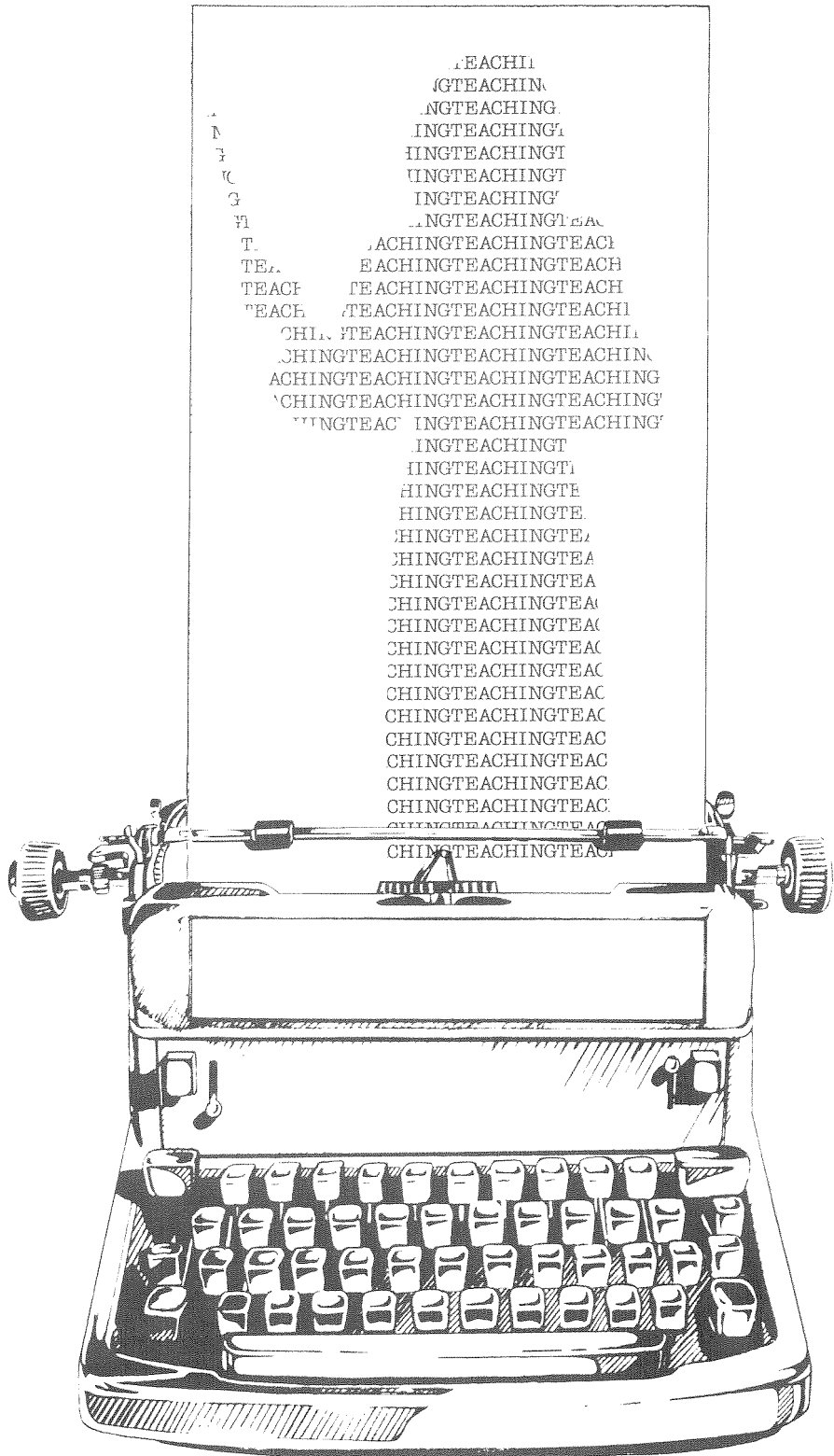
Dr. Oral Moses of the music department, was also selected to be a participant in an NEH Summer Seminar in 1986, entitled, “Afro-American Musicians in the Nineteenth Century.” The seminar examined extant musical documents, engaged in musical analysis, studied repertoires, and investigated oral and written musical traditions. Dr. Moses found the seminar to be beneficial in many ways. “It provided me the opportunity to do in-depth primary research in an area of

special interest to me, under the assistance and guidance of a nationally known scholar on the subject. I worked with professors from other colleges and universities who shared similar interests in our area of study." Additionally, his new acquaintances have provided opportunities for him to perform, and to share research at national meetings. "I will continue to look for programs that would allow for similar types of experiences."

Dr. Royce Shaw, a faculty member in the political science department, exemplifies the teaching/research connection. He took advantage of a program offered through the Department of Education, the Fulbright-Hays Groups "Projects Abroad Program," and applied for a grant to take 15 faculty members from Kennesaw College and other institutions in the Atlanta area on a study tour of China. For six weeks participants would study the historical, cultural, political and socioeconomic aspects of the process of development in China, for the expressed purpose of developing new curriculum units and courses based on their observations and experiences. He was awarded this grant and the tour will take place this summer.

CETL: Sponsored Programs strives to provide faculty with the most up-to-date information on professional development seminars, institutes, and grant opportunities of all descriptions. Opportunities abound for "research," on our campus, whether that research occurs in the humanities or in the sciences; in the form of experiments conducted in our laboratories, research conducted in the archives of libraries and institutes, or in the privacy of our own office; here or abroad; independently, or collaboratively; for a few weeks, a few months or even a few years.

All benefit when faculty become involved in the active pursuit of knowledge. The faculty member is



reinvigorated through acquisition of content, and stimulated through the interaction of scholarly colleagues; the students, as the recipients of new information, perspectives, and methods; our colleagues who share in the results of our professional efforts, and the institution in reten-

tion of "vital instructors." Patti Reggio, a faculty member in the physics department, summed it up beautifully in a recent conversation when she said: "This involvement keeps us alive in our own disciplines, and allows us to continue to breathe life into our teaching." ●