



NEW FROM THE TEACHING FRONT



From the **University of Nebraska-Lincoln**, Bette LaSere Erickson suggests that gearing courses to first-year students should focus as much on their prior learning habits as on the information they need to know.

For new high school graduates, the problem is one of shifting from teacher-directed study management techniques—teachers constantly checking to insure homework is done—to self-directed management—professors assume students will keep up the pace without constant nagging. These students had been used to studying in short bursts, and even then most merely reread assignments or underlined ideas.

For returning adult learners who have been out of the study loop for some time, they must re-learn how to study. These students, many of whom have been in the work force and who may have had to adapt to new styles of information processing, often overlook the cumulative effect of study—that study builds on each iteration.

In either case, Erickson suggests that Angelo and Cross's *Classroom Assessment Techniques* (1993) may provide some simple,

but effective study devices for first-year students. Here are just five:

Productive Study-Time Logs.

These logs not only record how much time was spent studying, but how studying was done and how productive the student felt his or her time was spent. These can be reviewed by student and teacher to determine more productive systems. If class size is a problem, perhaps peer review could be just as helpful (as long as peers don't share faulty study habits).

Punctuated Lectures. This is a self-reported spot check to see where students' attention is directed during lectures. This could even be a "game" with teacher yelling, "So where are we?" The student then has a minute or two to jot down a reflection of what he or she was thinking. If topic related, it could be a question or hypothesis of where the lecture is going. If off topic, they might write something like, "My next class" or "I wonder if I'll have time for lunch." These can be submitted anonymously, giving the instructor an instant reading of the student's grasp of

material. But they also alert students that focusing is an important part of study.

Process Analysis. Students take note of the steps they used to complete an assignment. This might be formalized as an outlined addendum to the actual assignment. The instructor can then comment (but probably not grade) the outline with helpful hints.

Diagnostic Learning Logs.

This system applies the Process Analysis to the entire course, with students outlining how they processed classroom lectures, assignments, readings, etc. Students are then asked to review periodically (maybe every four or five classes) to observe patterns and problems. They can also match patterns to grades, seeking to find those activities that seem to foster good grades and those that portend bad grades.

The fact that all these techniques place the greatest effort on the student suggests the shift from teacher-directed to self-directed study. But the students will need help in making that shift, especially in the first year of school. Although we expect students to function independently in college, we should make sure they have the tools to succeed.

Diversity and Teaching:

Improving General Education Courses for Language Minority Students

by Nadine S. Koch, Associate Professor of Political Science

Kennesaw State College is recognizing the increasing diversity of our faculty and student populations. As the complexion of the metro Atlanta areas changes it will, and in fact already has, resulted in a more diverse student body. Currently, there are significant numbers of African American and Asian students attending our institution. Although

the majority of our students are Anglo, recent studies report the deterioration of reading and language skills among **all** students. The teaching approach I will describe has merit in increasing the skill level of all our students.

What is the responsibility of faculty in educating an economically, racially, culturally, and educationally diverse student body? I

would like to share my experience and involvement in a project aimed at improving the teaching of general education courses to such diverse student populations. California State University, Los Angeles implemented a project aptly named Project LEAP- Learning-English-for-Academic-Purposes.

(See *DIVERSITY*, page 10)