



## 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

**K**ennesaw 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)

This project was awarded a three year grant by the Department of Education through the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE).

Project LEAP sought to improve the academic language skills of language minority students, both native and foreign born, by enhancing the curriculum and teaching methods of selected general education courses. The primary target populations were immigrant or native-speaking bilingual low income and/or first generation college students. The project consisted of four major components: (1) study group courses, team taught by peer study group leaders and language specialists and paired with the corresponding general education courses; (2) faculty development training to assist general education instructors to incorporate language instruction into their courses; (3) curriculum modification to institutionalize language sensitive instruction into the targeted general education courses; and (4) project continuity and dissemination to train future instructors and study group leaders, and to share project results both at the home institution and with other colleges and universities.

I was one of three faculty chosen for the second year of the three year long project. As in the state of Georgia, all California college students are required to take an introductory American government course. This course requires a library research component. I will describe how I enhanced the teaching of this course, focusing on the changes I made in the library research writing assignment.

Prior to my involvement in Project LEAP, I had assigned my introductory classes an 8-10 page library research paper. I would divide the class into small groups, each representing a contemporary topic related to American politics. A handout outlining the paper re-

quirements was distributed in class and briefly discussed. Little guidance was provided in how to conduct library research in the social sciences, nor was much assistance afforded in how to write a college level research paper. Not surprisingly, I was consistently disappointed in the quality of the papers I received from my students. Grading these papers at quarter end was a frustrating and painful experience.

Project LEAP changed my entire perspective on the objectives and goals of this writing assignment. I decided to employ what is referred to as

the "scaffolding" approach. Basically, one breaks down a more difficult and complicated task into smaller, more manageable components. I have since found that most college students, especially those of the target population, have little or no experience writing a college level library research paper. From the students' perspective this is a daunting assignment. By dividing the paper into less overwhelming steps, one accomplishes the pedagogical goals of teaching library research and the writing of a well organized paper using proper citation style (APA).

My students are now guided in this process in a step by step manner. During the first week of the quarter, students are given a tour of the library with a focus on the use of new computerized technologies for searching topics. Students are required to find eight references on their assigned topic. References are to include newspaper articles, news magazine articles, political magazine/journal articles, and broadcast news stories. Coinciding with the library tour is a simple library assignment where

students are required to use the Readers Guide and computerized sources to locate material on their topic. To complete the library assignment the student must note appropriate references and find and xerox one of those references.

The second step in the scaffolding approach is to teach students how to write a review of the literature. I require that students purchase an APA style manual if they don't already have one. I distrib-

*Flexibility and willingness to try a different approach keeps me constantly looking for better ways to teach, and, I believe, infuses my courses with new vitality every time they are taught.*

*– Helen Ridley*

ute in class a sample literature review, one which exemplifies proper summarizing, including quoting and paraphrasing. The next assignment requires students to summarize only one of their references, using a combination of quotes and paraphrasing. This allows early detection of improper summarizing techniques and problems with proper citation style. Approximately two weeks later, students must turn in their Review of the Literature section. This section of the overall paper consists of eight well integrated summaries, using both paraphrasing and direct quotes. The challenge is to summarize eight references in no more than two double spaced typed pages. Students are required to turn in a Reference page with their Review of the Literature, again using the correct APA bibliographic style.

This first part of their paper is graded and returned for revisions. The corrected version will be included the final paper submitted at the end of the quarter. Additional handouts and class time is spent on discussing the remaining sec

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tions of a research paper: the Introduction; the Discussion section; and Conclusion. It has become quite evident that students are in need of basic information on how to construct a thesis statement, provide supporting arguments, as well as the inclusion of counter arguments.

First generation college students have no one at home to assist in this type of assignment. Overall, few of our students have learned these skills in their secondary education and few have acquired the necessary competencies in college level English classes. This is especially the case for non native speakers. Language minority students are in desperate need of as-

signments structured using this scaffolding approach. This approach reduces anxiety and apprehensions. In light of the abysmally low reading and language scores of native students, I have found this approach beneficial to the typical student.

The quality of student papers has greatly surpassed my expectations. More importantly, the skills the students acquire fulfilling this requirement are skills that will be utilized throughout their college years. There is no question that this approach places a greater burden on the instructor. More class time is devoted to the paper writing assignment. In addition, there

are more assignments to grade (library assignment, summarizing assignment, Review of Literature, and final paper with Introduction, revised Review of Literature, Discussion, Conclusion, Bibliography). However, I firmly believe the investment is a worthwhile one. I have seen tremendous growth in skill level in ten short weeks. It's not often students thank you for making them work hard, for providing challenging assignments. And many thanks you will receive! This approach builds confidence. No longer will students feel they need to "shop around" for the professor who doesn't require a serious library research paper.

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Exchanging Ideas on Computer-based Teaching of Differential Equations

Needs and Preparedness of KSC Students for Computer Technology

Development of Computer Strategies for KSC Faculty

A Longitudinal Investigation of Perceived Stress Patterns in Pre-Service Student Teachers & First Year Teacher Educators

A Study of Metabotropic Glutamate Receptors

Upper Level Chemistry Courses Offered Through Distance Learning