The Teaching College Course: A Faculty, Staff, and Graduate Student Development Program to Enhance Teaching Quality

Shelly J. Schmidt[1] Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition
Phil Buriak[2] Department of Agricultural Engineering
Cleora J. D'Arcy[3] Department of Crop Sciences
J. Bruce Litchfield[4] Department of Agricultural Engineering
James S. Javenkoski[5] Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition
R. Kirby Barrick[6] Department of Human and Community Development

College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, IL 61801

Abstract

Faculty members at research-based universities have been extensively trained in their research discipline and are expected to establish and maintain successful research programs. Most of these same faculty members have received no formal preparation in teaching methods, yet are expected to become effective teachers. This is an unrealistic expectation that often leads to the use of ineffective teaching practices, causing frustration for both teachers and students. Such does not have to be the case; university faculty members can learn how to teach. The Teaching College course has been developed and taught by five senior faculty members in the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences (ACES) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to assist faculty, staff, and graduate students in obtaining the training needed to become effective and empowering teachers. This paper describes the contents and mechanics of the Teaching College course and discusses the feedback and reflec-tions of its participants and instructors since its inception in Fall 1997.

[1]Professor of Food Chemistry
[2]Professor of Technical Systems Management
[3]Professor of Plant Pathology
[4]Professor of Agricultural Engineering and Assistant Dean in the college of Engineering
[5]Graduate Teaching Assistant
[6]Professor of Agricultural Education and Associate Dean in the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences

Introduction

The job description of the traditional university faculty member is currently a topic of intense public scrutiny and debate (Glassick, 1997). This is especially true at research-based universities. Faculty members need to excel at both their research and teaching functions. Teaching students is essential to the mission of every university and, thus, to every faculty member who has a teaching appointment within the university. Most faculty members at research-based universities, such as the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC), are well trained in conducting research in their specific discipline. However, most of these same faculty have received no formal preparation in teaching and student learning, activities that are critical to their professional endeavors (Parini, 1997).

To assist faculty members, staff, and graduate students in obtaining the training they need to become effective teachers, a group of senior faculty members in UIUC's College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences (ACES) Academy of Teaching Excellence developed a Teaching College course. The first course was held in Fall 1997 and has been offered now for four consecutive Fall terms. The two main objectives of the Teaching College course are to: 1) improve the quality and implementation of instruction, and 2) develop and foster a teaching community for dialogue and sharing best practices, similar to the communities that have evolved in the research and outreach missions of UIUC.

The objectives of this paper are to: 1) describe the contents and mechanics of the Teaching College course and 2) discuss the feedback and reflections of the Teaching College course participants and instructors since its inception in Fall 1997.

18

Course Contents and Mechanics

Description

The Teaching College course is a program designed to assist tenure-track faculty members (especially junior faculty), staff (i.e., teaching associates, lecturers, researchers, and postdoctoral personnel), and graduate students interested in learning how to teach. The global objective of the course is to improve the quality (content and implementation) of the participant's instruction for the purpose of enhancing student learning. The participants are strongly encouraged to dialogue about their teaching, inside, as well as outside, of class. The class sessions typically include theoretical and practical information on teaching topics, time for interaction and discussion with colleagues, and discussion about individual progress and specific classroom concerns. Participants develop a teaching portfolio and are involved in peer observation of their teaching. Participants receive two texts for the course, *Teaching Tips* (McKeachie, 1999) and *Tools for Teaching* (Davis, 1993) and a year long NACTA membership. In addition, participants receive two binders, one for course materials and one for the teaching portfolio they begin to build during the course. The course has an ever-evolving web site, which contains course content modules, as well as streaming QuickTime videos of highlights from some of the course sessions and a photo gallery. The URL for the course web site is: http://webct.cet.uiuc.edu. You can browse the ACES Teaching College course web site by using acesteceguest as both the user ID and password names.

The course meets on Thursdays, from 5 to 7 P.M. for 10 weeks in a classroom that has a computer system networked to the World Wide Web. The Teaching College course begins approximately 3 weeks after the semester starts and finishes approximately 2 weeks before the semester ends in order to help the participants focus on their teaching responsibilities during the most intense and time-consuming weeks of the semester. Since the Teaching College course occurs over the dinner hour, the participants are served a catered, boxed dinner. Providing dinner helps the participants with their schedules and gives them some time to relax before the lesson for the evening begins. We encourage the participants to discuss topics related to teaching, either formally (e.g., a discussion is led by an instructor) or informally as they eat their dinner. The focus of these discussions varies, but is usually directed toward the previous week's course topic and the practical impact it has had on the participant's thinking or teaching behavior.

In addition to the 10 regular weekly class meetings, the Teaching College course participants attend four other activities: 1) the annual Fall ACES Teaching Symposium, 2) observation of an experienced teacher teaching their class, 3) the ACES Peer Observation Workshop and Process, and 4) the Annual All Campus Faculty Retreat

sponsored by the UIUC Teaching Advancement Board. The participants are also invited to attend a two-day Effective Teaching Workshop sponsored by UIUC's College of Engineering.

Upon completion of the course, each participant is awarded a certificate of recognition for his or her participation in the course. In addition, a homemade cheesecake (made by Dean Barrick) graduation party is held after the conclusion of the last class session.

Specific Course Objectives

A participant who completes the Teaching College course will be able to: 1) plan, implement, and manage effective in-class and out-of-class instruction, 2) apply research-based techniques of effective instruction, 3) plan and implement evaluations of learning and instruction, 4) interact effectively with their students, 5) make effective use of departmental, college, and campus instructional resources, 6) develop and use instructional materials, and 7) become part of an active teaching community.

Selection of Participants

A few months prior to each Fall semester the Associate Dean for Academic Programs sends a memo to the seven Departments Heads of the College of ACES, asking them to nominate potential candidates for participation in the Teaching College course. The memo encourages Department Heads to nominate new faculty members, staff, and graduate students, as well as others who would benefit from participating in the course. The Associate Dean then asks those nominated if they would like to voluntarily participate in the course.

Instructors

There are five instructors for the course from four of the seven College of ACES Departments. There is also a 50% graduate teaching assistantship associated with the course.

Sponsorship

The course has received financial support from the College of ACES, the Teaching Excellence Endowment, the Warren K. Wessels Academy of Teaching Excellence Fund, and four consecutive Provost's Initiative on Teaching Advancement (PITA) grants from the UIUC Teaching Advancement Board.

Participant Demographics

Participant demographics for the course are summarized in Table 1. To date, we have offered the Teaching College course four times: during the Fall semesters of 1997, 1998, 1999, and 2000. The average enrollment has been approximately 19 participants per semester. In Fall 1997 the course was only open to faculty members. In Fall

Table 1. Teaching College course participant demographics for Fall 1997 to Fall 2000.

Term	Fall 1997	Fall 1998	Fall 1999	Fall 2000
Total enrollment	20	18	19	18
Faculty	20	11	6	7
Staff (i.e., teaching associates, lecturers, researchers, and postdoctoral personnel)	0	3	1	2
Graduate students	0	4	12	9

1998 and following, the course was opened also to staff and graduate students interested in learning how to teaching. The graduate students can enroll in the course for 0.5 units (2 hours) of credit. In order to receive course credit the graduate students complete all the Teaching College assignments, attend eight one-hour seminars on University governance (in the Spring semester), and write a short paper on University governance. The topic of University governance was selected because information on this topic would be very beneficial for the graduate student participants desiring to pursue academic careers. Speakers for the governance seminars include the Chancellor, Provost, Dean, a department head, and the Associate Dean for Academic Programs. Each speaker-presents his/her perspective on governance to the group.

Course Topics

A brief description of the topics taught in the Teaching College course by session number, including selected references, are given in Table 2. The course topics are distributed among the course instructors based on instructor interest and expertise. Relevant journal articles, research findings, and summary instructor handouts are included in each lecture, along with practical tips from experienced teaching practitioners. In order to further the dialogue on teaching among Teaching College course classes, former Teaching College course participants are invited to return to the Teaching College course to share their teaching experiences with current class members. An underlying theme of the course is to help the participants learn how to effectively use a student-centered instructional model in their classrooms. Teachers must be trained to shift from disseminators of information to managers of learning before students will be able to develop higher order thinking skills and improve their abilities to solve

problems in a fast and ever-changing world. A shift from the traditional teacher-centered instructional model to a student-centered instructional model can improve both instructional effectiveness and the life-long learning skills of the students.

Peer Observation for Teaching Assessment Program

As part of the Teaching College course, participants are involved in a peer observation program. Each participant has two teaching mentors; the participant selects one mentor who is familiar with his or her subject matter (usually from the participant's home department), and the course instructors assign the other mentor from a group of College of ACES faculty who have volunteered to participate in the Peer Observation for Teaching Assessment Program. This group includes previous Teaching College course participants. Both the participants and all the mentors are required to participate in a three-hour Peer Observation Workshop conducted by the campus's Office of Instructional Resources (OIR). The participants are taught how to conduct an effective peer observation session using the Five-Part Peer Observation System developed through the joint efforts of the College of ACES and OIR. Over the course of the semester, participants are observed by their mentors for the purpose of improving their instructional content and delivery (formative evaluation), not for summative evaluation purposes. Barrick et al. (2001) contains the details of the Five-Part Peer Observation System.

Course Assessment

Over the four semesters both the participants and the instructors have assessed the effectiveness of the Teaching College course. The feedback and reflections obtained from both groups are summarized below.

20

Table 2. Topics taught in the Teaching College course by session number, including selected references.

Session 1: Learning Styles

We introduce the concept of learning styles and describe how the course participants can tailor their instructional delivery to better meet the learning preferences of their students. The participants complete the Gregorc Style Delineator® during this session and we discuss the learner characteristics of each Gregorc (1979) learning style category.

Session 2: Learning Theories

The participants work in small groups and create a model of what teaching and learning mean to them. We discuss and illustrate perception, memory, and concept formation during learning. We also describe the benefits of self-assessment and reflection following each instructional event (lecture, discussion, or laboratory) and the value of documenting which instructional activities worked well and which ones did not.

Session 3: Course Development and Levels of Cognition

We teach the participants how to develop a course, beginning with constructing a detailed course syllabus. The participants then analyze and discuss examples of course syllabi contributed by the participants and the course instructional team. We introduce Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives (Bloom et al., 1956) and teach the participants to relate the objectives of their course to the cognitive level of questions they use to assess student learning.

Session 4: Conducting Effective Lectures, Discussions, and Laboratories

We discuss various techniques to assist the participants in preparing, delivering, and assessing effective lectures, discussions, and laboratories. We use a role-playing vignette to illustrate common problems that may occur during classroom discussions. Further, we demonstrate ideas for making the classroom lecture more active (Dillon, 1984, Wankat and Oreovicz, 1994).

Session 5: Active Learning and Out of Classroom Instruction

Active learning is defined and the pros and cons of using it are discussed (Bean et al., 1982, Bean, 1996). We give examples of active learning activities ranging from safe to risky. Participants design and discuss an active learning activity that they can use in their classrooms. We discuss the how to's of assisting students with academic and life problems. We introduce campus resources, policies, attitudes, and record keeping aspects of helping students. We use role-playing vignettes to illustrate both appropriate and inappropriate ways to assist students.

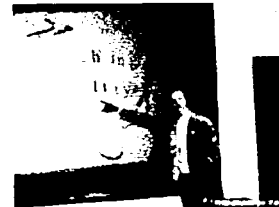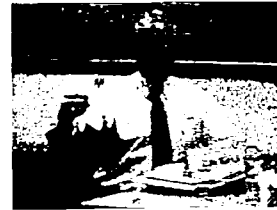## Sessions 6 and 7: Reflective Teaching Activity

Each participant prepares and delivers a brief lesson to a group of peers on one of several pre-selected tasks (Cruickshank, et al., 1981). The participants reflect on their performance in a group discussion with their peers and through self-assessment of a videotape of their teaching lesson. The participants write and submit lesson plans and a self-evaluation of their reflective teaching experience.

Session 8: Assessment of Faculty Teaching

We discuss how to assess faculty teaching using a variety of methods including student evaluations and peer observation. The participants learn to use and interpret their UHC (Instructor and Course Evaluation System (ICES) results for the purpose of improving their instruction. We also discuss corrective actions that instructors can use to improve their classroom learning environment based on student feedback (Cashin, 1995).

Session 9: Self Assessment: Teaching Portfolios and Teaching Philosophy Statements

We discuss the purposes for developing a teaching portfolio, the content instructors should include in their portfolio, and how to assemble it. Some members of the instructional team provide their teaching portfolio as examples. Finally, the participants write a teaching philosophy statement based on effective teaching practices they currently employ in their classrooms.

Session 10: Instructional Technology

The use of instructional technology to improve teaching is discussed. Participants are introduced to a variety of web-based synchronous and asynchronous software packages and instructional tools. Examples of campus courses that effectively use instructional technology are demonstrated, including Food Science and Human Nutrition 101 (Javenkoski and Schmidt, 2000) and Plant Pathology 199 (Schumann and D'Arcy, 1999).

Session 10: Participant Recognition Ceremony

Upon completion of the course, each participant is awarded a certificate of recognition for his or her participation in the course. In addition, a homemade cheesecake (made by Dean Bartrick) graduation party is held after class on the last night of instruction.

Participant Feedback

At the conclusion of each Fall semester, we asked the participants to reflect on their experiences in the Teaching College course and complete a course evaluation questionnaire (Table 3). They could submit the questionnaire with or without identifying themselves. We obtained responses from 46 out of 75 participants (approximately 61%) over the four semesters. For the first three semesters, we e-mailed the evaluation forms to the participants after the last class session. We found that the return rate, even after two reminder e-mails, was rather low (approximately 49% for the first three semesters). Thus, in the Fall 2000 semester, we asked the participants to complete the course evaluation form during the last class session (100% return rate). Below are the summarized responses to the items posed in the course evaluation questionnaire (Table 3).

Response to item one: For all four semesters, participants report 15 different topics or activities that were most useful to them. The participants named each of the course topics listed in Table 2 at least once. The four course topics cited most frequently by the participants were the Reflective Teaching Activity, being named by 20% of the participants; Course Development by 12%; Active Learning by 11%; and Learning Theories by 10%. The Reflective Teaching Activity was a good learning tool for both the "teacher" as well as "students" in the session. As one participant responded, "The most useful [topic or activity] was the experience of being a student in the reflective teaching exercise. It reminded me what it was like emotionally to be faced with new tasks and information that one person (the teacher) knew and the rest of us were supposed to figure out and that not figuring it out in view of one's peers can be a humbling experience."

The participants mentioned four additional items that were most useful to them, which are not specifically

Table 3. Teaching College course evaluation questionnaire.

College Teaching Course Evaluation Questionnaire

We would like you to reflect on your experiences in the Teaching College course. We are eager to obtain your feedback to improve the course for future College Teaching classes. Please share with us your candid response to each of the following questions. Please be as specific as possible. You can return the form anonymously or with your name on it. Thank you.

1. What course topics and/or activities were most useful to you? Why?

2. What suggestions do you have for improving the course (i.e., topics, activities, format, timing, organization, etc.)?

3. Discuss how your approach to the teaching and learning process has changed as a result of this course. Be as specific and quantitative (e.g., ICES score improvements) as possible and please include what you think may have brought about/catalyzed the change.

4. Overall, how satisfied were you as a learner during the Teaching College course? Please check one of the following and comment if you would like. (Note: This question was added in Fall 1998.)

_____ very satisfied

_____ satisfied

_____ unsatisfied

_____ very unsatisfied

5. What else would you like to share with us?

listed in Table 2. These were: 1) the opportunity to get to know and dialogue with their colleagues about teaching (4%); 2) the Peer Observation Workshop and Process (4%); 3) the positive and enthusiastic atmosphere created by the course instructors (2%); and 4) the demonstration of various teaching methods by the instructors throughout the course (1%).

Response to item two: Over the four semesters, a variety of suggestions for improving the course were received from the participants who completed the course evaluation questionnaire. Suggestions, grouped by two themes (Course length, timing, and format; and Improvements and changes in content emphasis), are summarized in Table 4. As with any request for suggestions for improvement, some participants gave opposing responses. For example, five participants suggested either covering more

material in each session or having fewer sessions, while two participants suggested that the course be expanded to a full semester (15 instead of 10 weeks).

Over time, we have used participant suggestions to improve the course. For example, the first year the course was taught the instructor provided "good and bad" example syllabi for the participants from campus courses. One participant suggested that they bring in their own syllabus from the course they are currently teaching and work on those. Based on this suggestion, the following year the instructor asked the participants to bring in their own syllabus if they were teaching or to locate one to use if they were not teaching. Another example is the addition of the levels of cognition topic (Table 2) in response to the request to discuss exam construction in more detail. Inclusion of this topic was also the outgrowth of the 1999

Table 4. Summary of participant responses for improving the Teaching College course for Fall 1997 to Fall 2000 (Table 3, Question 2) grouped by two themes. The number in parentheses is the number of participants who contributed the suggestion. No number indicates that only one participant contributed the comment.

Course length, timing, and format
Cover more material in each session or have fewer sessions (5)
Start earlier, like 3:00 or 4:00 P.M. (2)
Increase length of course to a full semester (2)
Consider using a retreat or workshop format (2)
Decrease the length of each session
Include at least one scheduled break
Move course from Fall to Summer
Improvements and changes in content emphasis
Increase the amount of reflective teaching (4)
Practice different types of discussion groups (3)
Establish new formal means of continuing teaching dialogue after the Teaching College course is finished (3)
Increase discussion time for the teaching philosophy statement topic (2)
Review other participants' syllabi during the Course Development session (2)
Increase the number of assignments/activities which require the students to apply their knowledge (2)
Increase the time for colleague dialogue (2)
Use reflective teaching tasks that relate to the subject-matter expertise or interest of the students (2)
Decrease the number of small group activities
Increase discussion time for exam construction
Spend more time on how to teach ethics-based content (i.e., content with no right or wrong answer)
Increase the time allotted for actually working on assembling the teaching portfolios
Use assigned readings from course textbooks more in class
Use peer observers from the campus Office of Instructional Resources
Increase one-on-one interactions between students and instructors
Include more practice on developing lesson plans
Increase discussion time for pedagogical issues surrounding the design and use of instructional technology
Include hands-on participation by the students during the instructional technology session
Use more than one type of learning style assessment tool
Increase discussion time for philosophy of grading
Include more teaching techniques, like teaching critical writing and thinking skills
Add session(s) for international faculty, such as explaining the educational system in the U. S.
Add session(s) specific to the field of study of the participants
Conduct two courses, one for beginning and one for more advanced teachers
Observe each other teaching and give feedback (in addition to the peer evaluation process)
Invite a guest speaker to discuss in detail some of the research done in the field of education
Have participants peer observe experienced teachers, individually or in small groups, and share observations
Include a session on ethical aspects of teaching (e.g., requiring students to purchase a textbook you authored)
Invite additional successful instructors to share their best teaching practices with the class

Annual College of ACES Fall Teaching Symposium conducted by M. Susie Whittington then from Pennsylvania State University and now at Ohio State University entitled "Cognitive Challenges for Today's Students."

Response to item three: Ninety-three percent of the participants reported that their teaching and learning processes improved as a result of participating in the course. Over the four semesters, participants listed a number of specific changes they had implemented in their teaching. Changes reported, grouped by five themes (Course preparation, Personal/Teaching skills, Teaching methods and active learning tools, Student needs, and Assessment of teaching and learning), are summarized in Table 5. Fifty-two percent responded that they began to use a variety of teaching methods and active learning tools in their classroom as a result of their participation in the

Teaching College course. One of the main reasons this increase occurred was because participants now realized they needed to reach a variety of learners in their classroom, based on information presented in the learning styles and learning theories sessions. The quotes below from two different participants serve to illustrate this point.

> "Becoming aware of different learning styles may have the biggest impact on altering the way I teach. I will make a greater effort to alter [my] teaching style, e.g. having more discussions, incorporating more examples in lecture, taking more advantage of different media for teaching."

Table 5. Summary of participant responses to how they think their teaching and learning processes have changed as a result of participating in the Teaching College course for Fall 1997 to Fall 2000 (Table 3, Question 3) grouped by five themes. The number in parentheses is the number of participants who contributed the suggestion. No number indicates that only one participant contributed the comment.

Course preparation
Defined and shared with the students the overall course objectives and specific objectives for each lecture (5)
Improved course syllabus, included expectations of the students (3)
Spent more time and effort preparing for the course than before
Personal/Teaching skills
Became more comfortable and relaxed while teaching (2)
Improved organizational skills
Created a more positive classroom environment
Became a better active listener for my students
Improved my lecture style
Teaching methods and active learning tools
Used a variety of teaching methods and active learning tools (24)
Adopted a student-centered approach to learning (5)
Increased the use of the web to improve student learning (2)
Led more focused and effective class discussions
Applied Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives to the teaching of the course material
Student needs
Increased awareness of different learning styles and used various teaching techniques to accommodate different learning styles (7)
Became more conscious of student needs and expectations (3)
Encouraged and aided students in understanding the material (concept formation), rather than just memorizing it for the exam (3)
Assessment of teaching and learning
Developed informal (mid-semester) feedback instructor assessment tools and/or a "feed-forward" assessment tool for student learning goals (4)
Improved exam construction practices (2)
Reflected on and recorded what went on in the classroom after each teaching session, including what went well, what needed improvement, and ideas for next time
Reconsidered approach to evaluation and grading

24

Table 6. Summary of participant responses to the question "What else would you like to share with us?" (Table 3, Question 5), grouped by three themes. The number in parentheses is the number of participants who contributed the suggestion. No number indicates that only one participant contributed the comment.

Additional suggestions to improve the course
Hold concurrent sessions on different topics
Spread course over two semesters
Increase the diversity and expertise of the presenters, include faculty from the College of Education
Require participants to select their mentors before the course begins to include them in more course activities
Have a follow-up course for past participants every two or three years
Eliminate meal with class
Provide assistance in scheduling peer observation by mentors
Broaden material covered in course development and active learning sessions
Insights and/or benefits received by participating in the course
Gained practical information that will assist me in becoming a better teacher (3)
Interacted with peers within the College of ACES that I might not otherwise have gotten to know (3)
Enjoyed the dinners provided at the start of class (2)
Textbooks and course handouts make a great teaching information resource (2)
Glad to participate right after joining the faculty, because it will help me get my teaching off to a good start
Boosted my confidence and competency in teaching creatively
Being a student in the classroom again helped me learn how to teach
List of teachers willing to have an observer in their classroom was very beneficial
Appreciated that the course was open to graduate students
Course shows that teaching is highly valued in the College of ACES; glad I decided to join the UIUC faculty
Expressions of appreciation and a job well done
Appreciated the instructors sharing their time, energy, knowledge, and insights in an enjoyable and enthusiastic manner (20)
Course logistics and content were very well planned, organized, and executed (2)

"I also learned that not everyone learns like I do. ... The learning styles section [of the course] made it clearer to me that I need to incorporate different teaching methods to accommodate different learners, and the section gave me some practical ideas about how to do that."

Overall, many of the participants expressed that they were now more aware of the need to focus on student learning and not just their teaching. As one participant stated, "The biggest way my teaching has changed is that I am more aware of whether my students are actually learning or if I am just teaching."

Response to item four: Question four was not included in the Fall 1997 course evaluation form. For the other three semesters, 50% of the participants responded that they were "very satisfied" as a learner during the College Teaching course, 47% responded that they were "satisfied," and 3% responded that they were "unsatisfied." No "very unsatisfied" responses were received. No additional comments from the participants were received.

Response to item five: Comments shared by the participants in response to this question, grouped by three themes (Additional suggestions to improve the course, Insights and/or benefits received by participating in the course, Expressions of appreciation and a job well done), are summarized in Table 6. Overall, participants expressed that they appreciated the effort put forth by the Teaching College course instructors, as well as the College, to assist them in improving their teaching skills. As one participant stated, "As a new faculty member, I feel that I made a good choice coming to this College, because it is my impression that teaching is more highly valued than at other research institutions. The Teaching College helped create this impression because it is a signal that the College cares enough about teaching to put real resources and faculty time into it."

Instructors' Reflections

Overall, we are very excited about the positive effects the Teaching College course is having on improving

instruction and on increasing the dialogue about teaching in the College of ACES. Some specific reflections about the course are given below.

As with any course, we see the need to continually update and improve the course content, adding new topics and activities each semester, while removing others. In addition to trying to provide excellent course content for the participants, we are also trying to share and model a variety of best teaching practices in the course.

We also see the importance of sharing the excitement and enthusiasm each of us has for teaching with each new class of participants. We highly value and see the need for active participation by all of the course participants. Over time, a strong, synergistic bond has developed between the course instructors, which adds a very favorable dimension to the dynamics of the course. We continue to encourage other interested faculty members to join us in our quest to improve teaching both through the efforts of the Teaching College course as well as other avenues.

We see the need to encourage the participants to continue the dialogue about teaching they have begun during the Teaching College course after they complete it. The Teaching College course graduates are encouraged to attend various teaching activities sponsored by the College of ACES, including the annual Fall Teaching Symposium designed to get the academic year off to a solid start and the six lunchtime Teaching Seminars held throughout the academic year. In addition, the Teaching College course web site contains a chat space that can serve as an ongoing, on-line discussion space for cohorts of the Teaching College course. We also held our first reunion activity for all of the Teaching College course graduates in Spring 2001 to help foster interactions across Teaching College classes and to help celebrate the impact the Teaching College course has had on encouraging good teaching. Our first reunion activity was a two hour lunch time workshop with two one-hour topics: "Portfolios and Teaching Philosophy Statements: How have we used them to reflect on and improve our teaching?" and "The Peer Observation for Teaching Assessment (POTA) Program: What have we learned?".

Summary

We believe the Teaching College course is making a substantial long-term contribution to improving the quality and implementation of instruction and fostering the development and growth of a teaching community in the College of ACES at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. We are in the process of conducting a follow-up survey to assess the long-term effectiveness of the Teaching College course on the teaching of course partici-pants. We appreciate the active participation of all of the participants over the last four years and look forward to many more Teaching College course classes. We encourage our colleagues in other colleges to try it — you'll like the process and the results!

Literature Cited

Barrick, R. K., P. Buriak, C. J. D'Arcy, J. B. Litchfield, and S. J. Schmidt. 2001. The Five-Part Approach to Peer Observation. Staff Study, College of Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, IL.

Bean, J. C., D. Drenk, and F. D. Lee. 1982. Microtheme strategies for developing cognitive skills. In: C. W. Griffin (ed.). New Directions for Teaching and Learning: Teaching Writing in All Disciplines (no. 12). San Francisco. CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Bean, J. C. 1996. Engaging Ideas. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Bloom, B. S., M. D. Englehart, E. J. Furst, W. H. Hill and D. R. Krathwohl. 1956. A Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: Handbook 1, The Cognitive Domain. New York, New York: David McKay Company.

Cashin, W. E. 1995. Student ratings of teaching: The research revisited. IDEA Paper no. 32. Center for Faculty Evaluation and Development, Kansas State University.

Cruickshank, D. R., J. Holton, D. Fay, J. Williams, J. Kennedy, B. Myers, and J. B. Hough. 1981. Reflective Teaching. Bloomington. IN: Phi Delta Kappa.

Davis, B. G. 1993. Tools for Teaching. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Dillon, J. T. 1984. Research on questioning and discussion. Educational Leadership November:50-56.

Glassick, C. E., M. T. Huber, and G. I. Maeroff. 1997. Scholarship Assessed: Evaluation of the Professorate. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Gregorc, A. F. 1979. Learning styles: Differences which the profession must address. In: Vacca, R. and J. Meagher (eds.). Reading Through Content. Proceedings of 2nd Annual Special Themes in

Reading Conference. The University of Connecti
cut: Storrs, CT. Curriculum & Instruction, pp. 29-34.

Javenkoski, J. S and S. J. Schmidt. 2000. Complementing
traditional instruction with asynchronous learning
networks. Food Technology 54(5):46-48, 50, 52, 55-
56, 58.

McKeachie, W. J. 1999. Teaching Tips. 10th ed. Boston,
MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Parini, J. 1997. Cultivating a teaching persona. The Chronicle
of Higher Education September 5, A92.

Schumann, G.L. and C. J. D'Arcy. 1999. Plant pathology
courses for agricultural awareness. Plant Disease
83:492-501.

Wankat, P. C. and F. S. Oreovicz. 1994. A different way of
teaching. ASEE Prism January: 15-19.

Effective Utilization of Faculty Task Forces for Problem Solving

Larry J. Connor[1] and Jimmy G. Cheek[2]
College of Agricultural and Life Sciences
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences
University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611-0270

Abstract

Deans and Directors of Academic Programs
typically utilize a variety of approaches in problem solving
within their specified areas of responsibility. Some of these
various administrative approaches to problem solving
include top down, bottom up, ad hoc delegation, standing
committee referral, and faculty task forces. Administrators
may use all these various approaches over time, depending
upon the problem one is facing, the resources available, the
administrative and support staff, and other factors.

The "top-down" administrative approach to
problem solving is typically used by administrators for a
variety of problems. In this case, the administrator does the
investigation, looks at alternative courses of action, and
makes the decision by himself, or with the counsel of a
limited number of colleagues. This style of problem solving
is a very efficient one, but does not always take advantage
of other resources available in making decisions. A direct
opposite of the first style would be the "bottom up" or
laissez-faire approach, where problems are left to be solved

by individual faculty or at the unit level within the college.
In this case, the major college level administrators basically
leave such problems to be handled at the lowest possible
level, with little or no interference from top administration.

The last three approaches are between these two
extremes. The ad hoc delegation approach is typically used
by Deans for dealing with many problems where there is a
qualified subordinate to handle the particular problem. The
individual may be an Assistant Dean, Department Chair, or
specific faculty members. The standing committee referral
method is typically used where problems fall within the
domain of specific committees. The best examples would
be in the academic programs area where problems in
courses would be referred to curriculum committees,
questions pertaining to graduate programs to the college
graduate committee, etc.

The task force approach typically utilizes an ad
hoc committee appointed by the Dean to develop recom-
mendations for dealing with a specified problem(s). Many
Deans use this particular approach over time, successfully
or unsuccessfully! Task forces have a very unique and
distinct role to play in problem solving. Administrators
should not undertake utilization of a task force for problem
solving without some cognizance of these transaction
costs and risks. The major purposes of this paper are: to
describe the rationale for utilizing the task force approach
to problem solving, the typical processes utilized in such

[1] Dean Emeritus

[2] Dean