

News from the Center for Research on Teaching Excellence

Accreditation timeline through the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC)

Syllabus Alignment Workshops (with Dr. Amy Driscoll & Dr. Swarup Wood, April 14 & 15; additional sessions pending for Summer and Fall 08)

Letter of Intent for Initial Accreditation (August 1, 2008)

Capacity and Preparatory Report (July 15, 2009)

Capacity and Preparatory Review Site Visit (Fall 2009)

Educational Effectiveness Report (Nov. 18, 2010)

Educational Effectiveness Review Site Visit (Spring 2011)

Initial Accreditation Decision (June 2011)

For more information see:

WASC's main site at <http://www.wascweb.org/>
UCM accreditation at <http://accreditation.ucmerced.edu>

Inside this Issue

Interview with Dr. Amy Driscoll	2
Faculty Workshops	2
Mini-grant Opportunities	2
Faculty Recommendations	3
Faculty Survey	3
Undergraduate Profile	3
Online Resources	4
CRTE Services	4

The Next Step in Accreditation

In less than two years, our campus will submit its Educational Effectiveness report to the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). That November 2009 report will document steps our university has taken to improve student learning, specifically the evidence of implementation and student achievement of learning outcomes.

Assisting us in this WASC accreditation process, we are fortunate to have Dr. Amy Driscoll, an Associate Senior Scholar with the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, who has served on accreditation review teams that have assessed educational effectiveness at other universities. She has also been a featured workshop presenter at WASC-sponsored conferences.



Amy Driscoll,
Associate Senior
Scholar with the
Carnegie Foundation
for the Advancement
of Teaching

On April 14 and 15, Dr. Driscoll will be conducting several two-hour workshops at our campus to assist groups of faculty from the same major program as they prepare for WASC accreditation review of their program's courses. Dr. Swarup Wood, a professor of chemistry from CSU Monterey Bay, will co-conduct these workshop sessions.

For information about participating in one of these sessions, please email Robert Ochsner at rochsner@ucmerced.edu.

Disability Services is a Teaching Resource

Some faculty may not realize that Disability Services exists to assist them as well as the students. There are laws requiring faculty to provide students with disabilities equal access to education. However, instructors are not left on their own to figure out how to accommodate these students. They can get help by consulting Brad Neily, U.C. Merced's Disabilities Services Coordinator.



Brad Neily, UCM Disability Services

Brad recounts, "Faculty have approached me about ways to make exams and quizzes accessible to visually-impaired students. This is only one example of the many ways, including remote time captioning for deaf students, on which we collaborate with faculty in meeting our requirement to provide equal access."

You can learn more about the different ways Disability Services coordinates with faculty to provide students access by coming to one of the workshops on April 9, from 1-2, and April 10, from 3-4. If these times don't work for you, please email Brad with questions or a request for an appointment (bneily@ucmerced.edu).

Upcoming CRTE Faculty Workshops

How can rubrics save time, enhance student learning, and improve your teaching? (week of March 31)

How is Disability Services a Teaching Resource? (week of April 7)

How can I increase my grant proposal success? Tying student learning to research (Fall 2008)

If you've missed any of the workshops held previously or will be unable to attend future workshops, Center staff will be happy to provide the information through individual consultations.

Faculty who mentor graduate students might be interested in the organization **Preparing Future Faculty** – who seek “to transform the way aspiring faculty members are prepared for their careers:

<http://www.preparing-faculty.org>

CRTE Newsletter

Page 2 of 4

An interview with Dr. Amy Driscoll

In a recent visit to campus, Dr. Amy Driscoll addressed what faculty will gain by participating in the development of UC Merced's educational effectiveness review for accreditation. Research and teaching are shared missions; “they can be functions towards a common end.” Research universities are at the forefront of the “production of knowledge which affects society; the education of students affects society.”

Faculty Workload

Many people on campus question how they can add one more responsibility to their already burdened agendas. So, we asked if there were some strategic and efficient ways to comply with WASC's educational effectiveness review. And, when it's all said and done, will there be a positive impact on campus from having undergone the WASC review.

Dr. Driscoll encouraged us to recognize that, indeed, there is some upfront work to do, such as the work of aligning curriculum with student learning outcomes. But that demands a short-term commitment of perhaps a couple of afternoons at the most – with long-term payoff. In fact, that work will ease the recurring responsibilities of course and syllabi development.

Graduate Student Development

Further, this process benefits current initiatives. In our goal to educate future faculty, graduate students could “serve on an assessment committee to share their knowledge and gain professional experience with some mentoring” to gain a certificate in teaching distinction. As a final teaching practicum, graduate students would be paired with interested faculty to “review student work together to gain new insights into what students are learning and not learning” for two days during the summer. “This could be a powerful and innovative strategy for a research university” to succeed at documenting student learning.

WASC is looking for teaching practices that actually require minimal effort to implement, but research has demonstrated they have great effect on student learning. So, Dr. Driscoll advises that we make the accreditation process our own.

Final Thought

“Don't do it for WASC – do it for UC Merced, to create better prepared students!”

Apply for mini-grant teaching support!

All faculty are encouraged to apply for Center grants and fellowships. The best proposals will explain anticipated improvement in teaching, its efficacy in terms of current scholarship on learning, and appropriate plans for assessment.

Mini-grant awards will not exceed \$5,000. Review of submissions will begin on March 30 for Fall semester awards and October 1 for Spring semester awards. Early submission will improve chances of funding.

For more information or an application, please visit the “Grants and Fellowships” link on the Center website at <crte.ucmerced.edu> or contact Juana Dumagan (jdumagan@ucmerced.edu) at 228-7950

Faculty Recommended Resources

Often the best suggestions for improving your teaching come from those who are *in the trenches* with you. The Center will be compiling these ideas and suggestions as resources for all faculty. We hope to feature faculty recommendations in each issue of the newsletter, so please e-mail any tips or suggestions to crte@ucmerced.edu with *Faculty Resources* in the subject line.

Education for Judgment: The Artistry of Discussion Leadership by C. Roland Christensen & David A. Garvin (1992) encourages using classroom discussion to encourage critical thinking skills and application of knowledge. According to the authors – "Many of the essays describe the building blocks of successful group leadership: negotiating a contract governing the conduct of the group; orchestrating a constructive process of questioning, listening, and responding; encouraging independent thinking; and guiding participants toward useful roles in their interaction with one another."

**Recommended by Jennifer Manilay, Ph.D.,
Assistant Professor, Natural Sciences**

"One of my favorite resources for new ideas and engaging conversations about teaching, learning and faculty development in general is the *Tomorrow's Professor* email newsletter out of Stanford University. It is subscription-based and free of cost. In particular I appreciate the artfully

succinct summaries of new scholarship exploring the frontiers of our profession."

**Robin DeLugan, Ph.D., Assistant Professor,
Anthropology Program**

"Like most Psychology courses, I have to teach sections that have 50-140 students in them. A continuing problem is how to engage students in class activities and assessments that do not require extensive grading time from either me or a TA. Last month I read Bean's book *Engaging Ideas**. It contains a large number of very useful ideas for both activities and assessments that fit this requirement well. I am working now to adopt some of these in my courses. I recommend this to any faculty member."

**Will Shadish, Ph.D., Professor,
Psychological Sciences Section**

*This text is available for check-out from the Center library in KL 167.

We are listening!

During mid-March, all faculty were contacted to complete an electronic survey about teaching needs and interests. The following are some key findings. For more details, please visit crte.ucmerced.edu under "Newsletter."

Of faculty respondents ...

Seventy percent rated a high level of interest in learning more about UCM students' level of preparation for college studies

About 40% rated mentoring graduate students of high importance as a workshop topic

Nearly three-quarters felt they had expertise in providing interactive lectures and over half in active-learning principles.

A majority rated the following categories in graduate student professional development of high importance:

- Developing curricula
- Fostering dynamic classroom discussions
- Facilitating cooperative/group learning
- Instructing laboratories or discussion sections

How does the Center help with WASC review?

WASC will be looking for evidence that faculty are aligning their syllabi and teaching practices with student learning outcomes. Individuals or specific discipline groups can contact the Center to receive assistance in this important task.

Do You Know* ...

...where our undergraduates are from?

S. F. Bay Area – 28%
San Joaquin Valley – 32%
Southern CA – 27%

...what their majors are?

Engineering – 18%
Natural Sciences – 34%
SSHA – 34%

... how many freshmen speak a language other than English at home?

Only another language – 16%
Another language & English – 32%

*Office of Institutional Planning & Analysis, Fall 2007

Useful Online Resources

University of California, Merced

Center for Research on Teaching Excellence

Office: 167 Kolligian
Library
Phone: (209) 228-7950
Fax: (209) 228-4128
General email:
crite@ucmerced.edu

Robert Ochsner,
Director of CRTE
rochsner@ucmerced.edu
(209) 217-7186

Juana Dumagan,
Administrative Assistant
jdumagan@ucmerced.edu
(209) 228-7950

For more information about
resources & upcoming
events

please visit:

crite.ucmerced.edu

CRTE Services

Faculty development
Instructional workshops
Grant opportunities
Videotape analysis of lectures
Faculty orientation
Syllabus design consultation
Instructional mentoring
Survey design consultation

Creating university-wide conversations about learning outcomes and how to evaluate student work has been one result of the pending WASC accreditation. The following resources can jumpstart your syllabus design and enhance your understanding of how to assess student outcomes.

Rubrics – Students learn best when they know from the outset what they are expected to produce. Providing students with an assignment **rubric**, a formal description of the attributes of quality work, can help make learning outcomes explicit and allow students to focus their work. However, finding the time to create one well may be a struggle. This website – <http://rubistar.4teachers.org> – has some pre-made rubrics that you can adapt to your own task or the template to start from scratch. Either way, with a well-constructed rubric at hand, your students can no longer claim you didn't tell them what you wanted them to do. The site also allows you to assess the success students have with various features of your rubric. Armed with that information, you can intervene in ways to enhance student learning where they need it most.

Objective Test Questions - Formulating good test questions is a snap! Or, so it seems to students and those who've never had to create one. Specific advice about creating objective test questions in various formats is available from the Computer Assisted Assessment Centre:

http://caacentre.lboro.ac.uk/resources/objective_tests/index.shtml

Student Evaluations – The National Institute for Science Education provides templates from many disciplines that instructors can adapt to evaluate how well student learning and course objectives are coinciding. These instruments can be password protected so that only you and your students can access the online tool; when completed, you can download the results and determine any adjustments that may be needed in the course. Templates even exist for alumni or employer surveys – for those programs seeking to evaluate how well their graduates have been prepared -

<http://www.salgsite.org>

Online Extension of the Classroom through pbwikis - Some instructors are making use of pbwiki technology to extend the learning beyond the classroom. Short for peanut butter wiki, <http://pbwiki.com> targets educators and allows them to set up a site for each class, if needed. There are multiple uses of the sites; for example, you can use the site to see what students are grasping in class and what needs clarification. You can post specific questions that you want students to answer before the next class or ask them to post summaries of the lecture. Or, a different student may be charged with keeping minutes for the class each day and posting them to the pbwiki. This way, students can have a source to double-check assignments or what was covered in class. And, instructors can see how clearly their thoughts were really perceived by the students.

Help with Technology - *University of Washington's Learning & Scholarly Technologies Catalyst Help Center* provides explicit steps for using programs for web publishing, audio or video production. The site also has some ideas for using technology to enhance student engagement and augment your teaching objectives -

<http://catalyst.washington.edu/help/index.html>