

News from the Center for Research on Teaching Excellence

The Times They Are a [Substantive] Changin'

What is "Substantive Change?" Why should UC Merced be concerned? The U.S. Department of Education requires that universities without "general approval" status must be reviewed by a regional accreditor for new programs or significantly altered programs. This usually means that if the curriculum or method of delivery of a degree-granting program is changed **more than 50%**, UC Merced must request approval from WASC, our accreditor. Typical changes include new programs, new modalities (distance ed.) and off-campus locations. To get "general approval" status and therefore no longer be subject to this substantive change process for new programs, UC Merced must have ten approved programs for ten years at the degree level in question – bachelor, masters, and doctoral levels. Since UC Merced will be growing many new programs over the next decade, it is clear that we must pay attention to this process.

Last spring Anthropology was the first program to undergo Substantive Change Review. We are happy to report that the major was approved! We have just submitted a proposal to WASC for a new Sociology major, and we should know the results by early spring. Since serious sanctions can be applied if we fail to follow the rules, faculty with any questions about whether a change in their program constitutes "Substantive Change," should contact Karen Dunn-Haley, Accreditation and Faculty Development Coordinator at kdunn-haley@ucmerced.edu or x4671.

Grant Supports Student Teaching Assistants

UC Merced graduate students will publish an online guidebook designed to enhance undergraduate teaching and learning, thanks to a two-year \$295,484 grant from the U.S. Department of Education Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE). This grant, secured by the Center for Research on Teaching Excellence, will allow approximately eight to ten faculty and graduate students per year to network with colleagues, develop innovative curriculum, and prepare to effectively meet the needs of students. Overseen by CRTE staff, graduate students will work in teams, have the opportunity to research and share teaching techniques, and ultimately develop segments of a teaching guidebook with a faculty mentor. The online guidebook will include brief single-subject teaching approaches that especially address the needs of first-generation college students; curriculum will be published on the Center website and in the California Digital Library. Through these professional opportunities, graduate students will gain advanced pedagogical training with increased preparation as future faculty. [Click here for more information.](#)

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

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

Capacity and Preparatory Report (July 7, 2009) ✓

Capacity and Preparatory Review Site Visit (Sept. 29 - Oct. 1, 2009) ✓

Educational Effectiveness Report (Dec. 14, 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>

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Education Grant Writing Workshop



Hosted by Laura Martin and Anne Zanzucchi on November 12th, this Center workshop focused on identifying strategies for planning and assessing education projects, with several opportunities to practice drafting ideas based on case studies. The vocabulary and process of traditional research can translate into grant writing practices, which was the framework for our activities. Within the hour, teams were developing feasible, measurable activities to support education-related goals.

Interested in a consultancy on your grant proposal? Please feel encouraged to contact either Laura (ext. 4629) or Anne (ext. 4173). If you missed the workshop, but are interested in the resources, the presentation slides are available [here](#).

Syllabus Development Tips!

What is the best way to design a useful and engaging syllabus? As Applied Mathematics Professor Arnold Kim suggests, try [backward design](#). Traditionally, we design a syllabus by topics, often informed by textbook chapters. Instead, start by identifying the [student learning outcomes](#) for the course (i.e., the knowledge and skills students will demonstrably acquire). Do you want your students to be able to analyze literature using particular theories or to design an experiment using appropriate controls?

Working backwards from these learning expectations, ask:

- What activities or projects will my students do that are specifically designed to develop desired knowledge and skills and to gauge their growing proficiency? Where will this work be done - in class, in section, or at home?
- What will I ask my students to do to cumulatively demonstrate achievement of the skills and knowledge we have been working toward?
- In what ways will my TAs and I interact with (instruct) our students to promote development of these skills and knowledge over the semester?

Answers to these questions will give your course shape, provide rationale for the work you and the students do, and connect all aspects of the course in service of a set of shared learning expectations. Developing your syllabus is then a matter of describing these intentions and linking them to timeline or course schedule.

For more ideas for syllabus development, including templates and legally required information, please check out our [Course and Syllabus Development Resources](#) or contact a [CRTE consultant](#).

The Student's Perspective

Students Assessing Teaching and Learning (SATAL) students interviewed UCM undergraduates passing by the OSL office during a tabling session on a Tuesday morning in early November. They asked undergraduates about the qualities of a good lecturer. Sample student responses appear below.

A good lecturer is...

“One who presents the material in a unique and interesting way. A good lecture keeps me engaged in the presentation.” ~ *Creg Todd, Junior, SSHA*

“Someone who engages the entire class and allows them to analyze the subject matter and can still find a way to have fun in class!”

~ *Ashley Thomsen, Senior, SSHA*

“Able to show or teach the application of everything they teach, such as relating the most obscure topics to larger importance or relevance.”

~ *K. Chico, Senior, School of Engineering*

“When a lecturer is enthusiastic in what they are lecturing about.” ~ *Joe Andrews, Sophomore, Natural Science*

“A professor who can present even the most drab and boring of subjects and turn it into something both engaging and interesting.”

~ *Miguel Herrera, Senior, SSHA*

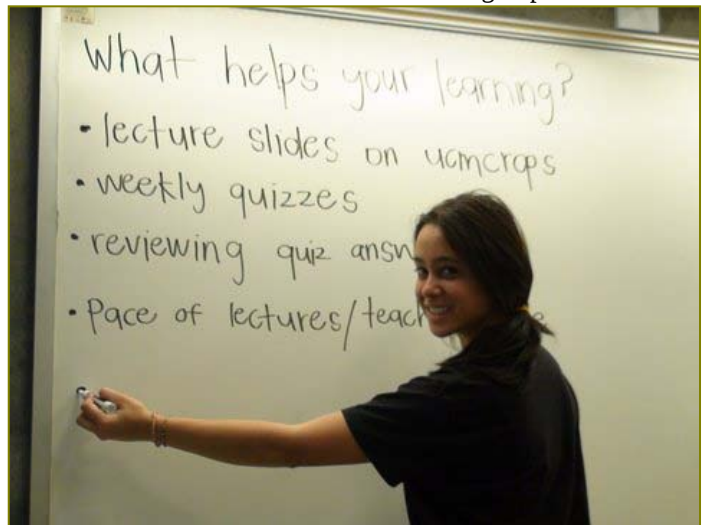
“Presents the material in an orderly and clear fashion and goes at a good pace. They are also animated and gets the class involved.”

~ *Michael Coste, Senior, Natural Science*

“One that can motivate students to understand the material, regardless of its difficulty, rather than to simply teach it.” ~ *Hormoz Shamony, Senior, School of Engineering*

“Someone that makes a student want to come back to class.” ~ *Heath Hernandez, Senior, SSHA*

SATAL student Celina Chun leads a group session



SATAL: Students Assessing Teaching and Learning

SATAL students have been actively responding to a variety of assessment requests by the instructional faculty of the three schools. This fall semester SATAL performed four focus group sessions, four class observations, five class interviewing sessions, and twenty one class video recordings. Overall, SATAL has supported programs, faculty, and TAs in their assessment efforts.

Feedback from faculty has been positive. "I found the results from the student interviews extremely helpful in identifying changes I could make to improve the class," responded Professor Will Shadish to evaluative questions about his experience. "I already made specific changes to the course--(1) giving students copies of completed quizzes with correct answers after the quiz is over, (2) giving students a study guide for mid term exams, and (3) changing the way I call on students to ensure all students are called on."

For more information about the SATAL program, visit their [website](#) or contact Adriana Signorini in person in COB 214, by phone at 228- 4766, or by e-mail at asignorini@ucmerced.edu.

Teaching and Technology Series

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For more information about
resources & upcoming
events, please visit:

<http://crte.ucmerced.edu>

Many individuals took advantage of the Teaching and Technology Series this fall to gain technical skills and pedagogical insight on various technologies, including CROPS, Microsoft Word, Facebook, and iTouch. CRTE staff member Belinda Braunstein provided a hands-on workshop on using the Forms feature on MS Word to improve the grading process. A panel consisting of



Writing Program Assistant Director Tom Hothem, History Assistant Professor Ruth Mostern, and Sociology Assist Professor Simon Weffer shared views about how they use Facebook to engage with their students, innovate their teaching, and collaborate with other researchers. Librarians Susan Mikkelsen, Sara Davidson, and Teal Smith discussed how iTouch technology is being used by the Library to deliver asynchronous instructions. [Click here to view select video podcasts of these and past presentations.](#)

For next semester, we have another exciting line-up. Here's a tentative schedule, and more details will be available on the Center website in January 2010.

- Week of 1/25/10: CROPS Refresher Course
- Week of 2/08/10: Captivating PowerPoint Presentations
- Week of 3/08/10: Electronic Teaching Portfolios
- Week of 4/12/10: E-mail Management and Other Productivity Strategies

Teaching Matters Series

The *Teaching Matters Series* for graduate students featured sessions this fall on different learning modalities and active learning techniques. Teaching Assistants can take advantage of CRTE's video consultation service as well as other services. [Click here for more info.](#) Next semester, we are co-sponsoring a series with the Career Services Center on **Creating a Teaching Portfolio**:

- Writing a Teaching Philosophy Statement: Tuesday, Feb. 2, 1-2 pm in the Acorn Room (tentative)
- Creating an Effective CV: Tuesday, Feb. 16, 1-2 pm in the Career Services Center or Acorn Room (tentative)
- How to Write a Syllabus: Tuesday, Feb. 23, 1-2 pm in the Acorn Room (tentative)
- Building Your Digital Teaching Portfolio (Week of March 8, date and location to be announced.) This workshop is offered in conjunction with the Center's *Teaching and Technology Series* and will explain how to put all the elements of your Teaching Portfolio into a digital package:

Talk about Teaching: The Center also will arrange for a room and date for TAs to meet regularly to discuss teaching and to share tips. Tentatively, the date and time for these sessions will be the last Wednesday of every month from 12pm to 1 pm.

FIPSE Guidebook Fellowships and Workshops: The Center has obtained Department of Education, Fund for Improvement of Post-secondary Education (FIPSE) Grant. Through this grant, the Center will offer workshops required for fellows selected for the program, and open also to interested graduate students. The workshops topics are: Make Assessment Work for You! (February, date TBA); Survey Design and Analysis (March, date TBA); and Documenting and Publishing Results (April, date TBA).