



CENTER FOR
RESEARCH ON
TEACHING
EXCELLENCE
AT UC MERCED

News from the Center for Research on Teaching Excellence

January 2013 - Volume 6, Issue 1

Center for Research on Teaching Excellence

Office: 167 Kolligian Library

Phone: (209) 228-7950

Fax: (209) 228-4128

General email:

crte@ucmerced.edu

Robert Ochsner,
Director of CRTE

rochsner@ucmerced.edu

Mike Truong, Assoc. Director

mtruong@ucmerced.edu

Amy Fenstermaker,
Instructional Dev. Coordinator
afenstermaker@ucmerced.edu

Adriana Signorini, Assessment
asignorini@ucmerced.edu

Belinda Braunstein, ELI
bbraunstein@ucmerced.edu

For information about
resources and upcoming
events, please visit:

<http://crte.ucmerced.edu>

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Mobile Learning Initiative Receives National Recognition

According to recent national reports, about 60 percent of college students own a smartphone and/or tablet. Moreover, there are over a million apps available in the Android and Apple marketplace, with apps available for virtually any discipline. Always-on devices coupled with cheap/low-cost apps are paving the way for ubiquitous (anytime, anywhere, and any device) learning, decentering the classroom as the primary place of learning. In other words, mobile technology in general and mobile apps in particular are changing both the mechanism and methods for how teaching and learning happens in higher education. The obvious question is how mobile technology can be leveraged to extend classroom learning, enhance student engagement, and improve student success.

In January 2012 the Center, in partnership with the Library, launched the Mobile App Learning Lounge (MALL)—a monthly event aimed at promoting digital citizenship, technological literacy, and collaborative learning around mobile technology. Opened to the entire campus, MALL events offer faculty, staff, and students a fun, social, and educational physical space to learn and explore the latest mobile applications (apps) and their benefits to teaching, learning, and productivity. Each session consists of participants giving mini-presentations, sharing best practices, and crowd-sourcing solutions to questions and problems. At these events, participants who are new to mobile technology get to see and experience first-hand how these tools can benefit them. Experienced mobile app users get to showcase their best practices, sharing practical tips, strategies, and ideas. Through these exchanges, participants learn first-hand not just



which mobile apps are being used, but more importantly, how they can improve students' academic experience. MALL participants consistently note the social interaction, the practical tips, and educational insight as the most meaningful parts of the MALL experience. (Continued on page 2.)

UCM students share ideas at a fall MALL event.

Mobile Learning Initiative (continued from page 1)

Recently, MALL was selected as a finalist for the Innovation Award at the 2012 Professional and Organizational Development (POD) Conference in Seattle. POD is the premier organization that is devoted to improving teaching and learning in post-secondary education. The Innovation Award recognizes creative initiatives that enhance teaching and learning and/or faculty development. MALL was recognized for its innovative approach in bringing awareness and attention to mobile learning in higher education. MALL provides a model that is high-impact, low-cost, and easily transferable to other institutions interested in starting mobile learning initiatives. Mike Truong, Associate Director, and Debra Meneely, Student Assistant, offered a MALL event at the POD Conference, and participants were able to experience first-hand how MALL works, and more importantly, how they can replicate similar events at their own campuses.

Faculty who are interested in learning more about mobile technology and how it can be employed in their classroom and curriculum can attend a MALL event or contact Mike Truong at mtruong@ucmerced.edu.

Hybrid Instruction

As the campus addresses shortages of offices and classrooms, one partial solution can be blended/hybrid instruction that combines traditional classroom instruction with various real-time or asynchronous versions of online teaching. Even in a minimal form that entails just one unit of instruction offered online, this option can potentially add more classes to the

university's inventory and increase the likelihood of more desirable day/time arrangements for teaching. Hybrid classes also allow a more nuanced approach to teaching our distinctive demographic of first-generation and generation 1.5 students, especially as they benefit from traditional face-to-face instruction yet derive value too from the flexibility and familiarity of using new media to learn.

Under current university policy, a course that is offered more than 33% online must be submitted to Undergraduate Council for review. Before launching a more robust form of online teaching that would require UGC approval, a sensible strategy is to pilot a unit of hybrid instruction. This incremental approach enables faculty who are new to online instruction to better understand some of the workload challenges of teaching without face-to-face contact with students, a challenge that also applies to "live" contact with students in virtual contexts. Faculty who are already familiar with online teaching can benefit too from sharing their experiences with colleagues—a variant of teaching others to better understand what we do ourselves.

Like other teaching and learning centers nationally, the Center is now dedicating more of its resources to support faculty who are interested in online teaching, including hybrid instruction. In addition to the regular workshops, webinars, and individual or group consultations, the Center also offers a certificate program for faculty, instructional staff, and post-doc fellows; this year's theme is "Teaching with New Media." Anyone who wants to refine what they already offer in a traditional classroom or online context is also welcome to contact us about moving towards hybrid delivery for one unit of instruction.

TA Highlights of 2012-2013

TA Orientation

Each fall the Center organizes an orientation for new and returning TAs. In general, the orientation introduces TAs to the teaching community at UC Merced and our student population. More specifically, the orientation includes sessions on preparing for the first day, conducting labs and discussions, and ethics-related teaching policies, as well as breakout sessions on challenges for international TAs, and using CROPS and library resources. If you have any questions about TA orientation and/or would like to help with the fall 2013 orientation, please contact Amy Fenstermaker at afenstermaker@ucmerced.edu.

Teaching Matters Workshops

Throughout the fall semester, our graduate student Instructional Interns organized and presented six Teaching Matters Workshops for other graduate student TAs. Topics ranged from grading effectively and efficiently to incorporating active learning and using student evaluations and assessment to strengthen one's teaching. For a brief description of Spring 2013 topics, as well as dates, times, and locations for these workshops, please visit <http://crte.ucmerced.edu/tmworkshops>.

Teaching and Technology Workshops

The *Teaching and Technology Series* introduces graduate students, along with faculty (Senate and Non-Senate), post-doc scholars, and instructional staff, to current and emerging technologies that can enhance teaching and learning. Best practices in the use of CROPS, mobile apps, and other technologies are shared to help manage classes and empower users to access, create, disseminate and share information. The spring schedule is available at <http://crte.ucmerced.edu/ttworkshops>.



New TAs discuss their prior experiences and their expectations for the year at the Fall 2012 TA Orientation.

Coffee, Tea, and Teaching

CTT events for graduate students occur on the third Tuesday of the month from 3-4 pm in the Bobcat Lair. Pop in any time during the hour! These casual and informal gatherings provide an excellent opportunity to grab some refreshments, get some good ideas for teaching, and chat with your fellow graduate students. During the spring 2013 semester our informal topic of conversation will be the academic job search. Coffee, Tea, and Teaching events are co-sponsored by the CRTE and the Graduate Student Association (GSA).

Instructional Internships

Graduate students who have a current or pending appointment as a teaching assistant are excellent candidates for Instructional Internships, which provide opportunities to learn about effective teaching through Center-sponsored workshops and activities. There are currently 21 Instructional Interns, and one of their primary responsibilities is to facilitate the Teaching Matters Workshops (see above). For a detailed list of the different levels in the internship program, please visit <http://crte.ucmerced.edu/grants>. If you would like to become an Instructional Intern and/or have questions about the program, please contact Amy Fenstermaker at afenstermaker@ucmerced.edu.

Raising the Issue of Online Course Assessment

To support and sustain assessment activities, the SATAL program trains undergraduates in data gathering and effective reporting. Without charge to users, this service offers a variety of data gathering options with subsequent evaluation of results, if requested. Common options include **focus groups**, **classroom observations**, **interviews** of individuals or groups, **survey** distribution, and **classroom videotaping**. These services are provided upon request and are shaped to the specific needs of the teacher or program supervisor. Each SATAL client receives a detailed report that summarizes the results of the inquiry and that highlights any emerging trends. Since 2009 faculty and administrators from throughout the campus have used SATAL services with steadily increasing frequency, from an average of 30 services provided in its first year, 42 services in its second year, to 60 services in its third year. Faculty and staff have reported they are “very satisfied” with types of services available, helpfulness of findings, the request process, and the professionalism of SATAL students. The SATAL program was instrumental in UCM’s successful 2011 accreditation review. SATAL was selected as a finalist for the Innovation Award at the 2011 Professional and Organizational Development (POD) Conference in Atlanta.

As online education grows at UC Merced, so does the need for online course assessment. Research confirms that students learn most effectively from active engagement with information and ideas, and one of SATAL’s goals is to develop assessment tools for online course assessment to verify the effectiveness of online instruction and student learning. The SATAL program has already carried out **class interviews** for some hybrid writing courses, and now there is clearly a need to investigate how existing assessment tools can be adapted for online instruction. The program is working on adapting the **online class interview** process to

help faculty strengthen their teaching by providing them with anonymous, candid feedback on the course’s strengths and weaknesses.

Over the past several years, there has been increasing interest in hybrid courses at UC Merced. The SATAL program is invested in identifying tools that give faculty timely, accurate, and in-depth feedback about the hybrid courses they are teaching. Faculty interested in using SATAL services in their classrooms, should contact Adriana Signorini at asignorini@ucmerced.edu.



Undergraduates Ryan Sowers and Topher Gehrman facilitate a class interview per faculty request.

Teaching with New Media

This academic year the CRTE is offering a certificate program on *Teaching with New Media* (TWNM), aimed at helping faculty and instructional staff incorporate digital tools in their class or curriculum. We asked three faculty participants to share about the experience in the program. Here, Maria Radhika Albert (Math), Alex Tolley (Biology), and Carrie Menke (Physics) share some insights.

CRTE: *What initially motivated you to attend the TWNM workshops?*

AT: I think we are in a potential transition point with education, and technology is an enabler of

Teaching with New Media (cont.)

this change. Newer ways to engage students to actually learn are needed. Thus the TWNM offerings are interesting to me as a way to spark ideas in new approaches to teaching.

CM: I wanted to make my classes and the assignments more engaging for the students. I also noticed that students don't use textbooks as the primary resource in classes, which is how I used them.

MRA: I teach online hybrid course for Math 5, so I was naturally curious to see what new technologies have emerged that might enhance and personalize my course.

CRTE: *How has participating in the TWNM workshops impacted your teaching?*

MRA: TWNM is the need of the hour. There were many new tools and technology that I have come to know about through the workshops. There are some tools that I currently use in my course like Adobe Connect and Piazza. After attending one of the webinars, I applied the layout changes in my Adobe connect meeting room. My new layout helped students to easily locate the info they were looking for.



Instructors consider projects for students in TWNM.

AT: I piloted the use of Mightybell [collaborative website] for the BIO 1 Labs. I thought its approach to content management and communication was more suited to the modern student than CROPS' Resources and Announcement features. I need to think harder

about how that can be made to work to encourage student communication amongst themselves, particularly with regard to thinking about biology. However, it considerably reduced 1:1 emails, which was a success.

CM: Although I reference online simulations and videos of demonstrations in my lectures, this site [Mightybell] allowed the students to discuss videos they and/or I have linked to the site. I intended to use this aspect as an engaging form of lecture preparation. In my quantum mechanics course (PHYS 137), instead of having students do presentations they worked in groups to create videos. Their video needed to communicate some aspect of quantum mechanics correctly and in an engaging way.

CRTE: *What have you found most helpful about TWNM workshops?*

CM: The workshop style allows me to practice a few things at a time, giving me an opportunity to explore how something can be useful in a course. And the facilitators have vetted different options, so I'm not lost in a sea of multimedia options, trying to figure out which has effective educational applications without a time-intensive learning curve.

AT: Hands-on working with selected tools to see how they work, and the input of other lecturers regarding these tools.

MRA: My first session was the Practicum workshop. The hands-on activities and working with fellow instructors was an enjoyable, learning experience. It is very enlightening when we actually use a tool like Animoto just to see how creative and resourceful one can be in delivering traditional subjects in the 21st century. Knowledge of the current technologies is so important in today's learning environment, even if we don't necessarily implement them right away into our course. It certainly paves the way for creativity and better ideas that fit our specific course.

Explore the web tools these instructors are referring to!

www.piazza.com
www.mightybell.com www.animoto.com

Spring 2013 Workshop Schedule

Teaching Matters Series

These workshops offer professional development in teaching and learning to all *graduate students*, especially teaching assistants. For workshop locations and more information, please visit <http://crte.ucmerced.edu/tmworkshops>.

Date	Workshop
Tue, 1/29, 10-11am	Create a Foundation for Success: Setting Expectations
Wed, 2/13, 1-2pm	Dealing with Classroom Challenges
Tue, 2/26, 10-11am	Cheating or Collaborating?
Mon, 3/11, 2-3pm	Teaching with Technology and Creative Media
Wed, 4/10, 12-1pm	Advanced Grading: Designing and Implementing Rubrics
Thur, 4/25, 11am-12pm	Composing a Teaching Philosophy: Do's and Don'ts

Coffee, Tea, and Teaching

Please join us for refreshment, a teaching handout, and a chance to meet with your fellow grad students. This event is co-sponsored by the Graduate Student Association (GSA) and the Center for Research on Teaching Excellence (CRTE). All events are held in Bobcat Lair (KL 169).

Date	Feature events
Tue, 2/19, 3-4pm	This semester Career Services will be providing resources for those looking for academic jobs at these events.
Tue, 3/19, 3-4pm	
Tue, 4/16, 3-4pm	

Teaching and Technology Series

These workshops introduce *faculty*, *postdoctoral scholars*, *graduate students*, and *instructional staff* to current and emerging technologies that can enhance teaching and learning. Face-to-face workshops (f) are held in KL 260. Webinars (w) are held at <http://bit.ly/crtewebinar>. For more info, please visit <http://crte.ucmerced.edu/ttworkshops>.

Date	Workshop
Fri, 1/25, 11am-12pm (f)	CROPS Overview: Best-Practices, Strategies, and Tips
Tue, 2/5, 10-11am (w)	Teaching with Open Educational Resources
Wed, 2/13, 11am-1pm (f)	Mobile App Learning Lounge (MALL)
Wed, 2/20, 11am-12pm (f)	Effective Scientific Presentations
Wed, 3/13, 11am-1pm (f)	Mobile App Learning Lounge (MALL)
Tue, 4/9, 10-11am (w)	Collaborative Environments for Research, Teaching, and Learning

Teaching with New Media Series with Certificate

These workshops introduce *faculty*, *postdoctoral scholars*, and *instructional staff* to effective use of new media to enrich any class or curriculum. All workshops are held in KL 260. For more info, please visit <http://crte.ucmerced.edu/fssworkshops>.

Date	Workshop
Tue, 2/19, 10-11am	Teaching with Twitter
Wed, 3/20, 11am-12pm	Teaching with Digital Collections
Thu, 4/4, 11am-12pm	Assessing Asynchronous Online Learning
Mon, 4/22, 10-11am	Creating a Personal Learning Network
Mon, 5/13, 11am-1pm	Final Project Showcase and Certificate Ceremony