

Teaching & learning



UW professors take a fresh approach

by Lynda Olsen, Chronotype staff

A concept called the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning is changing the way UW-Barron County professors approach research and teaching.

"It's the idea of treating effective teaching and learning as endeavors that are worthy of serious research, rather than striving on your own to improve your teaching," said Nancy Chick, UW-Barron County associate professor of English.

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning perspective was developed by renowned U.S. educator Ernest Boyer during his presidency of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching from 1979-1995 and popularized in his 1990 book "Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate."

In pursuit of excellence

Above from left are UW-Barron County professors Nancy Chick, Mary Hoefft, Cary Komoto, Tracy White and Joel Friederich. The five are among university instructors worldwide who have embraced the concept of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, which recognizes academic research on teaching and learning with the same respect given other academic research questions.

Boyer's model of scholarship gives equal value to research and to the use of resulting new knowledge to benefit others in and beyond university classrooms.

In 1994, 67 scholars at universities worldwide founded the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning to open a multicultural, cross-disciplinary conversation and create common ground for collaborative research with the potential

for immediate impact.

"There are these people who have been treating their students' learning very seriously," said Chick. "It just hadn't made it out into the public perception yet."

Chick is a member of the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning board of directors and one of five UW-Barron County professors who are International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning members. In November, she and UW-Barron County geography professor Cary Komoto, assistant professor of communication and theatre arts/English Joel Friederich, professor of French and communication and theatre arts Mary



See TEACHING, Page 7



Tracy White assists with specimen identification

Teaching ...

Continued from Page 1

Hoelt and assistant professor of biological sciences Tracy White presented research projects on post-secondary teaching and learning at the annual International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning conference in Washington, D.C.

FLIPPING THE TOWER

Komoto said that the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning symbolizes a cultural change in academia that adds teaching and student learning to the categories of acceptable, respected research problems.

“That change in the culture kind of flips the whole idea of the ivory tower on its head,” he said.

It is a fresh, systematic approach to the traditional, discipline-focused research that has historically separated scholars from students and each other, said Friederich.

“Traditional research pushes you toward objects of inquiry that take you away from students,” he said. “In this case, the object of

inquiry is students. This redirects all that energy to the classroom and asks the students to join it.”

The International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning insists on multiple forms of evidence-based research to show that students are learning or to help them learn and requires that research results be disseminated through publication or presentation, a union that creates the possibility for immediate application, Chick said.

“That sharing is crucial. Otherwise you start over every time,” Friederich said. “In traditional research, it seems like it takes a long time to get from the research to real change in the world.”

“The power of the academic community is to build on what others have done,” Komoto said. “So here the subject is teaching and learning.”

“The power is that you have all these people who have great ideas and if you can exchange them, you’re so much better.”

One International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning goal as a global organization is to translate physical, cultural and conceptual language

to bring together scholars from around the world, said Chick.

“Finding cross-cultural language is crucial, because the problems the world faces are cross-cultural,” said Friederich. “We must bring it to students to prepare them.”

UW SYSTEM ROLE

The UW-System supports the pursuit of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning concept through an initiative that includes the Wisconsin Teaching Fellows and Wisconsin Teaching Scholars programs.

The programs name 15 early- and 15 late-career professors respectively each year to conduct yearlong, Scholarship of Teaching and Learning-related projects. Fellows and scholars then promote the practice of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning at their individual universities and in the systemwide academic communities that are thriving as a result of these initiatives.

“Our primary focus here at this university is our students and our students’ learning,” said Hoelt. “We’re in a good place for finding kindred spirits who find this research exciting and valuable, and our students will benefit.”

In November, UW-Barron County psychology professor Linda Tollefsrud became the fourth UW Colleges Wisconsin Teaching Scholar, joining Chick, Hoelt and Komoto.

Nancy Chick, Cary Komoto and Tracy White have been Wisconsin Teaching Fellows, and Chick was selected in November to the Office of Professional and Instructional Development as director of the WTS program.

“What I’m so proud about is that most of us are from large research universities,” said Chick. “We come here, and we don’t just do lip service about student learning. We’re making it our career.”

The Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning was founded in 1998. Now in its fourth year as a Campus Program Leadership Cluster in Carnegie Academy’s Institutional Leadership Program, the UW-System will expand its collaborations to other institutions, including the University of Colorado and Miami Dade Community College, said Chick.

SCIENCE SAVVY

Tracy White is collaborating with nine UW professors across the state to help students increase the sophistication of their understanding about the nature of scientific inquiry.

“Most, if not all, biology laboratories spend some time discussing the scientific method, and a variety of exercises exist that are

used to help students appreciate the nature of scientific inquiry,” she said. “Even so, many students leave biology classrooms with a simplistic understanding of the nature of science.”

White’s project includes several steps:

- Determine what students understand and misunderstand about the nature of scientific inquiry coming into the classroom.

- Determine what instructional strategies might improve student understanding of the ways in which ideas are developed in the sciences.

“Based on data compiled from anonymously surveying student preconceptions, we have developed a series of case studies directed at helping students think critically about the elements of scientific inquiry that move ideas forward,” said White.

LESSON STUDY

Komoto’s research utilizes Lesson Study, a Japanese professional development technique



Every word counts

Above, UW-Barron County assistant professor of English Joel Friederich helps students critique drafts of each others’ final papers.

designed to increase teaching and learning effectiveness through systematic examination.

The process calls for collaborating instructors to develop a lesson and then teach, observe, critique and revise it to maximize classroom learning.

Komoto worked with professors from the UW-Marshfield, UW-Fond du Lac, UW-Washington County, UW-Manitowoc and UW-Sheboygan to correct geography misconceptions commonly held by introductory-level students. The instructors asked physical geography and geology students to answer open-ended questions about physical geography phenomena and also individually interviewed some students.

The resulting lesson is designed to help students understand the scientific argument supporting global warming and how to analyze competing claims. It was taught at the UW-Fond du Lac last spring and followed by an assess-

ment to find out if students are moving past their misconceptions and learning more effectively. The results were less than the professors had hoped for, so the lesson was revised and taught this fall at the UW-Marshfield. It will be taught again this spring at a site to be determined.

“The idea is when we’re done with it, any other professor can take it and use it in their classroom,” Komoto said.

In January, Komoto and White begin a Lesson Study with three UW-Eau Claire geographers.

COMPLEXITIES OF LANGUAGE

Chick’s project includes three studies that are intended to help her students explore the central questions and practice the processes that assist literary scholars in their search for explanations about life’s complexities. Her methodology is a product of her discipline and includes close reading, interpretation and the analysis of written texts, primarily from students.

Two of the three studies were Lesson Studies:

- Chick is working with professors from the UW-Marathon County and the UW-Washington County to understand “misconceptions and resulting reading skills students apply to literature.” The research enabled the professors to create a lesson that has “proven to develop students’ engagement with the precise language of the literature,” Chick said.

- Her research with professors from the UW-Marathon County, UW-Green Bay and UW-La Crosse has resulted in a lesson that helps students process complex pieces of literary texts that are often critical to understanding the entire text.

Chick’s individual study builds on the above lessons to extend students’ understanding to verbal and written expressions of their interpretations. The lack of appropriate language is often the



Complex learning

Above, UW-Barron County English professor Nancy Chick guides students through an assignment focused on understanding complex pieces of literary texts.

See **TEACHING**, Page 11

Teaching ...

Continued from Page 7

problem, she said.

Her project is designed to give them that language through the use of models by writers who are considered experts. It begins with looking at how writers talk and write about specific topics, continues with imitation of sentence structure and is meant to lead to the creation of a unique new writing voice. It's the same learning process that Frederick Douglass and Steven King used, she said.

"Giving them the language will help them develop and progress in their ways of thinking about more sophisticated literary texts and ideas," Chick said.

ACADEMIC PERSONA

Joel Friederich's project helps English composition students develop an academic voice by bringing together creative writing and the conventions of composition.

"I propose that composition courses are really an introduction to all of college as a place of discovery and conversation," he said.

The goal is for students to develop their own personas that



High stakes

Above, UW-Barron County professor of French, theater art and communication Mary Hoeft's Scholarship of Teaching and Learning research has challenged her to increase the percentage of students who read their assignments.

allow them to participate in that scenario.

"I believe composition is a struggle because it is all about learning the 'academic voice,' how to sound like an educated person

on paper, and I realized that many students have the misconception that academic voice is about one thing: following rules or conventions," he said.

Friederich uses creative writing methodology to help composition students understand that many of the rules are used precisely because they effectively create convincing personas.

His presentation also considers the need for students to understand their existing images of the educated person. Friederich asks students to write stories from their lives that describe how they responded to academic personas.

"Students have to look at college as a stage, and like actors, students need to learn how to act in a new role," said Friederich.

The process requires them to combine their "creativity, engagement, discovery" with the conventions of composition, he said.

A NEW CHALLENGE

Thirty-six-year Barron County veteran professor Mary Hoeft had assumed for years that her students read the three or four assignments she gave each semester.

Then as a Wisconsin Teaching Scholar in 2004, she designed an anonymous survey that posed the question to 124 students in her First Year Seminar classes. The answer surprised and motivated her.

"On any given day, 46% of my students were reading," said Hoeft.

The others told her, "If you want us to read, grade us."

So this fall, Hoeft implemented a journal in the First Year Seminar

class, which is part of a Learning Community that keeps a group of 24 students together in three classes including Chick's English 101 and Hoeft's Public Speaking course.

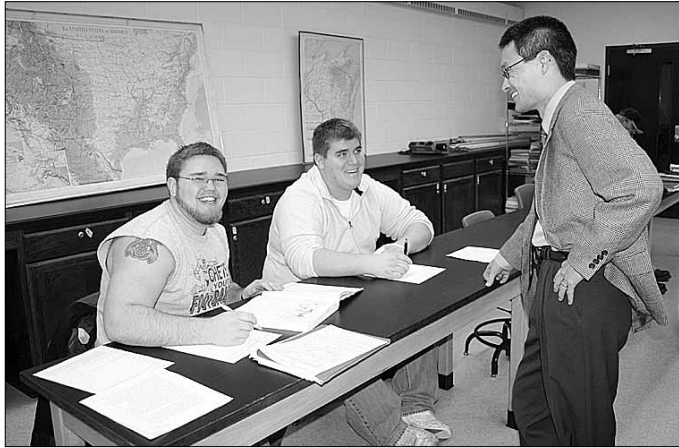
Chick routinely quizzes her English 101 students after each reading assignment, and Hoeft still asks her students to read for pleasure and also for class discussion, which plays a minor role in their semester grade.

The survey results were startling. The percentage of First Year Seminar students who read their assignments is 95%, topping Chick's English class, where 74% of students read assignments.

But the overall percentage of Hoeft's Public Speaking students who are reading their assignments

December 27, 2006—RICE LAKE (WIS) CHRONOTYPE—11 is unchanged. The challenge is clear.

"I think I've always listened to students, but I think I've always listened to students who wanted to talk," she said. "I think there are big changes coming in university education. This movement says being a researcher isn't enough now. We've got to care about more of our students."



Cary Komoto chats with his geography students