

THE MANTLE

Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

A Concept, a Plan, a Reality in the Making: Residential Colleges for Ole Miss

by Johnny W. Lott, Director

Tristan Denley, Department of Mathematics and Senior Fellow for the Residential College being built at the University of Mississippi, describes the new college as a place where teaching can occur in forms other than those traditionally seen on this campus.

Consider a living and learning space that is an all encompassing academic community for 466 students. The



Dr. Tristan Denley

Residential College will provide a place where students can live, hang out, and learn together. For freshmen, it will serve as a place where they can immediately find others with similar interests and study habits. Instead of feeling like 1 of 15,000 students on campus, the College will provide a community within a community. And one of

Denley's jobs is to arrange a transition for the students to find others with those similar interests.

There will be some introductory classes housed in the college where students may take classes in the building where they live. This close proximity of classes and living space will allow student relationships to be built quickly. Similarly, the music practice room, fitness center and other college facilities will be spaces where both faculty and students can mingle.

The 466 students chosen for the Residential College will be roughly divided into equal numbers of males and females, will include all levels from freshmen to senior, and will represent the diverse population of the university. Students must apply to be accepted into the college. Once a member of the College, they will have the opportunity of living there throughout their time as an Ole Miss student.

These students will be academically advised in a manner similar to other students on campus, but in addition the College's faculty fellows will work with the students as mentors and interact with the students to build relationships that go beyond academics. They will essentially become the wise uncle or aunt/advisor who can share interests in books, music, or theatre for example. They will listen to, counsel, and talk with students about issues and opportunities outside of academia. Students and faculty learning to interact on a personal level outside the classroom will become the norm with this group. Denley describes a space where a faculty member and the corresponding group of 10-12 students may eat together, play music together, sing together, or act together in settings similar to the social and interest clubs at Trinity College-Cambridge. The faculty mentor will become a significant adult in students' lives.

Teaching or being a mentor in this situation moves the faculty member beyond the classroom teaching experience into more of a life-teaching experience. What will start as a formal experience with a mentor will likely develop in a fluid manner as mutual trust grows.

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A New Addition to CETL

Dr. Nancy R. Wiggers recently joined CETL as a learning specialist. A native Mississippian, Dr. Wiggers attended Millsaps College, earned a BA in English from Delta State University, and an MA and PhD in Education from the University of Mississippi. For over twenty-one years she has been involved in education at both secondary and postsecondary levels as Assistant Professor in Education, Program Coordinator in The UM Intensive English Program, as well as high school English teacher. These opportunities afforded experiences in teaching both traditional and online courses in English for both native and nonnative speakers of English, as well as graduate and



Dr. Nancy Wiggers

undergraduate courses in education. Throughout her professional life, Dr. Wiggers has had opportunities to interact with a number of students representing a broad spectrum of diversity. These interactions helped shape her perspectives on education as an experience as well as education as a system. She is interested in issues related to learning and motivational theory, assessment, and the philosophical, historical, and cultural aspects of education. Dr. Wiggers enjoys exploring these issues with just about anyone, but especially with students. She encourages them to think reflectively, act purposefully, and be self-directed in their learning.

Universal Course Design in Brief

by Nancy R. Wiggers

Universal Course Design (UCD) is drawing a great deal of attention from postsecondary institutions. UCD is founded upon concepts developed by architects and engineers to develop structures and products for all individuals regardless of any disability or impediment they have. Shifting focus from developing something to accommodate people with special needs to developing something for all individuals inclusive of those with special needs was the impetus for UCD.

The UCD philosophy may be applied to postsecondary educational contexts. Course instructors perceive students as users of course materials to achieve course goals and objectives. Consequently, instead of perceiving students with disabilities as those who require accommodations that other students do not require, course instructors develop the course in a way that all students inclusive of those with special needs have the same means available to interact with course materials and achieve. Unlike product design and architectural contexts mentioned earlier, educational contexts expand the notion of “all inclusive” to encompass learner preferences and speakers of other languages. No matter the range of diversity considered, the foci for courses using the UCD model are user-centered, or student-centered.

A UCD course designer begins with traditional questions: What are the goals for this course? How will students interact with course materials to facilitate goal achievement? What types of experiences will students have to facilitate goal achievement? What types of assessment indicate student goal achievement? In

addition to these questions, however, an instructor devotes further consideration to who the students are. The students include those with physical disabilities related to hearing, speaking, seeing, movement, etc.; those with various learning styles such as visual, aural, tactile, etc.; those with ADD or ADHD; and those whose first language is not English. These are the students who need the same access to the course as all other students. How can this be achieved? The instructor considers options in the way that material is presented; in the manner in which students interact with materials; and in the way students are assessed.

Ensuring that material is presented across modalities, providing notes and presentation materials prior to classes, utilizing a variety of media to support or enhance class texts and creating online tutorials to reinforce foundational skills are just a few ways to implement UCD. Even presenting the syllabus, for example, not only in text form, but in a digital format with campus maps, hyperlinked materials, concept maps, assessment criteria, office hours, etc., provides broad access to the information.

Offering various forms of assessment, both formative and summative, allows opportunities for students to demonstrate achievement, thus making it broadly accessible. Moreover, as any form of assessment has limitations, multiple forms of assessment allow the instructor a clearer picture of student performance. Including not only test formats, such as multiple-

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Resources for Teaching

- In today's world, most campuses are considering distance education. One view is presented in the following:
<http://www.facultyfocus.com/online-seminars/is-distance-education-worth-the-cost/?aa=1225&c=FF&t=F81103> .
- For a free downloadable document on strategies for teaching large classes, see <http://www.facultyfocus.com/free-report/strategies-for-teaching-large-classes/?c=FF&t=F81024> .
- Time management is always an issue for faculty members and administrators. For one view on time management for administrators (with some hints that could also work for faculty), see the following:
<http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/faculty-development/time-management-strategies-for-academic-leaders> .

Teaching Tip

- From Online Learning, Rob Kelly gives “9 Tips for Creating a Hybrid Course.” See <http://www.facultyfocus.com/?c=FF&t=F81015> .

Awards and Grants

Graduate Instructor/Teaching Assistant Teaching Excellence Award

In the spring of 2008, the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning initiated a teaching award for graduate instructors or teaching assistants. Monetary support for the award came from The University of Mississippi Foundation and the Graduate School. The \$1000 award and “golden apple” trophy recognizes the importance of the teaching role performed by graduate students and exemplary teaching done by them. The first winner was Ryan Bubalo, Department of English, and a plaque showing this is displayed in the J. D. Williams Library. For the 2009 award, the deadline for nominations is February 1, 2009. For more information about the award, see <http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/cetl/awards.html> .

Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning Mini-Grants

The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning has created a funding opportunity for The University of Mississippi teaching staff called *Teaching and Learning Center Mini-Grants*. These grants are designed to support university teachers to enhance their teaching, scholarship/creative activity, and university-community leadership. The Center is especially interested in projects that bring educators together in collaborative efforts to undertake projects not normally funded by other University sources. The application deadline is January 21, 2009.

Eligibility Criteria:

- All teaching staff, including full-time faculty, adjuncts, and graduate instructors may apply, provided the applicant anticipates teaching at The University of Mississippi during the spring semester 2009.
- Each applicant is limited to one proposal for this application.
- If there are subsequent grants accepted, applicants are limited to two successive awards. At the present time, this is an experiment and no future grants are promised.

More details can be found at <http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/cetl/Mini-grants1.pdf> .

Residential College continued from Front Cover

In the best of all worlds, Denley describes faculty moving continually in and out of the Residential College and becoming a part of the fabric of the institution. He says that many faculty have already expressed an interest in working in this type of situation, but he would welcome other faculty who are interested.

He hopes to build not only a community of students and faculty together, but a community of faculty as well. In this environment, faculty will be encouraged to be part of an interdisciplinary team and to grow friendships outside their normal

academic areas. One perk of becoming a faculty fellow is that the College will pay for meals when the fellow eats in the College dining hall.

Faculty who are interested in becoming fellows should call or email Dr. Denley at 1792 or rcollege@olemiss.edu. Faculty members are invited to share this information with students. Students wishing to apply will find an application at www.olemiss.edu/rcollege. There is also a Facebook group at UM Residential College.

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choice, discussion, matching, but also performance-based assessments such as writing assignments, presentations, demonstrations, and illustrations are just a few options for evaluation supported by the UCD model.

Not surprisingly, there is a cornucopia of technological tools to assist a UCD application to any course, anything as simple as an ELMO used to project documents to a screen to voice recognition software that writes what you speak. For a complete list, please refer to www.eonline.org. Several of these tools are available through the UM Faculty Development Technology Center and IT Media. A tool immediately available to all faculty and students is Blackboard, which gives instructors opportunities to create a wide range of materials in

multiple ways as well as to create various types of learning experiences beneficial to “all” students.

The concept underlying Universal Course Design is not new. It is the foundation for any endeavor in which a creator, be it author, designer, teacher, or inventor, develops something for others to use or receive benefit. For those whose audiences are diverse groups of students, their UCD courses reflect and support diversity by including it in all aspects of the course.

References

<http://www.eonline.org>

<http://www.udeducation.org>

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P.O. Box 1848 • University, MS 38677 • 662-915-1391 • tlcenter@olemiss.edu • www.olemiss.edu/depts/cetl

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Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

P.O. Box 1848

University, MS 38677-1848