

The Learning Advocate

New First-Year Seminar Program Enjoys Record Enrollment

A new First-Year Seminar Program was initiated this fall under the auspices of the Provost's Office. It is directed by Dr. Tom Carskadon and housed in the Center for Teaching and Learning. The theme for the program is "One for Fun": an elective, 1-credit-hour course whose sole purpose is to provide an enjoyable introduction to the University and a particular discipline via a small seminar for first-year students and incoming transfer students. For faculty, it is meant to be "the course you have always wanted to teach," on any topic the faculty member would truly enjoy teaching, at a level suitable for beginning students.

Four hundred fifty students are currently enrolled in 25 different First-Year Seminars. This is the largest number ever for a first-year experience (FYE) program at Mississippi State University. Seminars come from a wide range of departments across the university. A small sampling of First-Year Seminar topics includes Death from Above: Will Climate Change Kill Me; Language as Power: Myths, Legends, and Truisms; History of Fast Foods; Biology of Middle Earth; Can $2 + 2 = 5$: the Math of Accounting Fraud; Reel Music: Exploring 100 Years of Movie Music; and Veterinary Medicine: Beyond Shots and De-Worming.

So far, both student and faculty enthusiasm has been high. If you would be interested in teaching your own First-Year Seminar next fall, please contact Dr. Tom Carskadon at 325-7655 or tomcarskadon@psychology.msstate.edu.



From the Director's Desk

The 2008 Fall Semester is off to a busy start with lots of initiatives underway at the Center for Teaching and Learning. Of special note is the Center being tasked to be a focal point for First Year Experience programs at Mississippi State University. To this end Dr. Rabideau has appointed Dr. Tom Carskadon as the Director of First-Year Experience within the Center for Teaching and Learning. Dr. Carskadon will work with existing First-Year Experience (FYE) programs on campus as well as coordinate new efforts. It is the hope of both Academic Affairs and Students Affairs that every first-year student will be involved in some way with at least one First-Year Experience Program.

One of the new FYE programs implemented this fall is the FYE Seminar. Last spring faculty were asked to submit a proposal for a 1-hour FYE Seminar on a topic of their choosing – the course they always wanted to teach. Thirty-one proposals were accepted and offered for the fall semester. Twenty-five of the FYE Seminars made with many of them being filled to capacity with 25 students. Overall, 450 first-year students enrolled in a FYE Seminar, which works out to an average of 18 students per seminar. See the article on page one for more information. These students are in an ideal situation to quickly connect with faculty, their discipline, their department and the university.

A First-Year Experience Team has also been created to help bring together the various stakeholders on campus that have been active in FYE programs over the years. Both Academic Affairs and Student Affairs are represented on the FYE Team as well as major FYE programs on campus. The goal of the FYE Team is to provide a vehicle for FYE advocates across campus to be able to share ideas, coordinate efforts and further enhance opportunities for first-year students to quickly connect to MSU and adapt to the academic culture of the university. The Center for Teaching and Learning is excited to be part of such a dynamic team of individuals that are committed to improving the learning environment for our students.

The Center has also been very busy providing training and support for myCourses. myCourses is the upgrade from WebCT to Blackboard Vista Enterprise Edition that was placed into production with the beginning of Maymester. The Center has provided numerous workshops to faculty since March teaching them how to migrate their courses from the old system to myCourses as well as how to use the new system. myCourses features a better user interface, integration with eInstruction, integration with turnitin.com, myMedia, and a host of other new features and improvements. There have been growing pains as is the case with any significant upgrade but overall the response to myCourses has been very positive. Please be on the look-out of a whole series of new workshops on myCourses and its new capabilities.

As always the Center will continue to provide Brown Bags on the latest issues in teaching on campus, seminars that focus on teaching and learning, instructional technology training and support, and faculty consultations. Please let us know what we can do to help you in the classroom.



Director

Learning Communities Thriving at MSU

The Griffis Learning Community, now in its fourth year, is comprised of 19 first-year students living in Griffis, the Honors residence hall, and taking two courses together: Honors General Psychology, with Dr. Tom Carskadon, and Honors Public Speaking, with Ms. Stacey Mann. Bonding is swift and deep as the same groups of students not only live together but also have at least one class together every day of the week. Meanwhile, the instructors coordinate course content and assignments.

The “PSY-COs” are first-year students taking General Psychology and Public Speaking together in Learning Communities. One group of 25 has Dr. Carskadon for General Psychology and Ms. Mann for Public Speaking, but there is no restriction on where they live, and it is open to non-Honors students. Another group of 22 Communication majors have their own section of Public Speaking with Ms. Khristi Edmonds and also take General Psychology together with Dr. Carskadon. A third Learning Community of two dozen first-year students links a section of Public Speaking taught by Ms. Amy Fountain and Dr. Carskadon’s General Psychology course; students in this Learning Community have either their residence hall (Rice or Evans) or their major (Psychology) in common.

Another well established Learning Community is the Engineering Living and Learning Community, directed by Dr. Donna Reese, Associate Dean of the Bagley College of Engineering, and assisted by Mr. Harry Lam, Graduate Assistant. This group of approximately 25 men and 10 women are first-year Engineering students who are living together in Hull Hall and taking Chemistry I with Dr. Debbie Beard. Mr. Lamm provides academic and career advice, and students have weekly access to tutors in their key science and engineering courses. They are also provided an upper class mentor/peer advisor in Engineering.

French House is another “repeat” Learning Community. A small group of students, most of them French majors, is living together in a house on the north side of campus, with a special graduate student resident advisor, Mr. Barrett Taylor. Only French is spoken in French House. The French Embassy is sending visiting scholars to make presentations to the group, and there will also be films and special activities. The French House program is directed by Dr. Salah Khan, Assistant Professor of French in the Department of Foreign Languages.

Finally, almost 300 students in the Day One First-Year Leadership Community, now in its second year and directed by Dr. Allison Pearson, are living together in Creswell Hall, are taking a special two-hour Leadership course as a group, and are co-enrolled in groups of 25 in various first-year core-curriculum courses. Those groups are subdivided into teams who will go out to 47 different project sites in the Golden Triangle, most of them off campus, to perform service-learning projects that are a central part of this program.

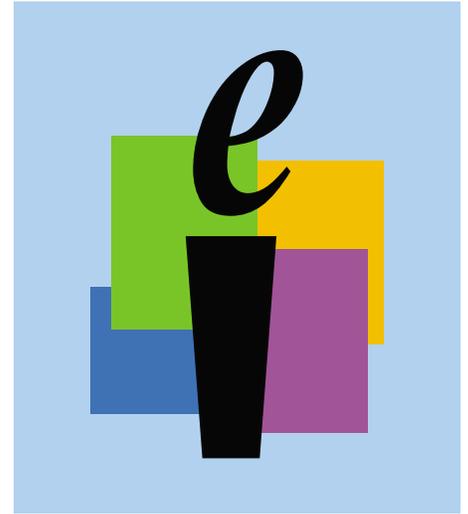


The number of Learning Communities at Mississippi State is expected to grow substantially in the future. Faculty with ideas for future Learning Communities should contact Dr. Tom Carskadon, Director of First-Year Experience. Now is the time to plan for next year!

eInstruction Integration with myCourses

The eInstruction audience response system offers integration with myCourses and an upgraded version. This integration allows students to register their clicker through myCourses, eliminating the need for a class key. By allowing students to enroll through myCourses only those students registered for the course enroll their clicker. An additional feature with the integration is the ability to send activity grades directly to the myCourses grade book. This allows grades to be available to students immediately providing them feedback on an activity or assessment.

The upgraded version of eInstruction is available on the classroom technology lecterns and may be downloaded from the ITS Software/Download page located at www.its.msstate.edu/Services/Software. This upgrade allows eInstruction to operate much faster which eliminates some of the previous version's lag time. For more information or to receive a free teacher kit, contact The Center for Teaching and Learning at 325-1403 or help@ctl.msstate.edu.



Turnitin News and Updates

Concerned about plagiarism in your class? Don't forget that the university has a site license to Turnitin, the leading plagiarism detection software. Turnitin uses a proprietary algorithm to check written work against three internal databases: an archived image of the Internet, a database of published sources, and database of student papers submitted to the system over the life of the company. As a new initiative, Turnitin is expanding the number of textbooks included in the published materials database.

This past August, Turnitin introduced a new interface. While retaining all of the functionality of the old version, returning users may notice a difference in the page layout and assignment options. New to this interface, instructors now have the option to not archive their student papers in the company database.

Turnitin has also been integrated into the new myCourses design. With section designer privileges, a Turnitin assignment may be added without even exiting your myCourses class website. For more information on using Turnitin, either directly or through myCourses, call Dr. Deborah Lee at the Center for Teaching and Learning at 325-0810.

First-Year Experience Team

Programs for first-year students at Mississippi State University historically have tended to be grassroots efforts. Faculty and Student Affairs have long recognized the importance of first-year experience programs to help students with the often difficult transition to the university. This is especially true for MSU where many students are coming from very rural areas with small populations. Over the past 20 years there have been many first-year experience programs initiated. Some have continued to thrive while others have come and gone. In an effort to bring more coordination and synergy to first-year experience programs at MSU a First-Year Experience Team has been formed. The membership of the FYE Team is diverse with representation from both Academic Affairs and Student Affairs. The membership includes:

- Ann Bailey, Director of Student Housing
- Tom Carskadon, Professor and Director of First-Year Experience
- Diane Daniels, Professor and Director of Developmental Programs
- Anna Dill, Director of the Learning Center
- Jerry Gilbert, Associate Provost for Academic Affairs
- Lisa Harris, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs
- April Heiselt, Assistant Professor and Director of Service Dawgs
- David McMillen, Research Professor and Director of Pathfinders
- Allison Pearson, Professor and Director of Day One
- Matt R. Raven, Professor and Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning
- Richard Raymond, Professor and Head of English
- Donna Reese, Associate Dean of the Bagley College of Engineering

The FYE Team has already met and the membership is excited about the numerous opportunities available to grow and improve first-year experience programs at Mississippi State University.

New Technology Classrooms Available

Four new technology classrooms are available as a result of funding from the Provost's office. The new rooms include: Dorman 152, Hand 1144, McCain 105, and McCool 111. This funding is now available on an annual basis, with ITAC making the classroom selections of two rooms per year. Additionally, Tully Auditorium in Thompson Hall equipped with a lectern through departmental funding. These rooms received an upgraded document camera, touch-pad control system, and podcasting capabilities.

For more information or to schedule a training session on the new lectern, please contact The Center for Teaching and Learning at 325-1403 or help@ctl.msstate.edu. If assistance is needed while teaching in the room, please contact the ITS Help Desk for immediate technical support at 325-0631. For more information regarding the classroom technology project go to www.its.msstate.edu/Information/classroom.



myCourses Update

myCourses has had a successful rollout at MSU. During summer term, 572 courses used the system. Currently there are 1658 fall courses in the system with the number growing daily. Currently, 175 faculty have attended myCourses training. Faculty who have attended training have indicated that it provided a good basic skill set and it enabled them to navigate the system and perform the common tasks easily. The upgrade has been an overwhelming success and the vast majority of faculty are pleased with the enhanced features of the new system.

CTL offers seven myCourses workshops: Introduction, Migrating to myCourses (from WebCT), Assessments, Assignments, Grades Management, eInstruction Integration, and Turnitin.com Integration. Please note, attendance in the Introduction workshop is required in order to attend any of the additional specialized trainings. Additionally, due to time constraints, we are currently enforcing our seat limit of 15 participants. Therefore registration is now required in order to attend a Center workshop.

All current documentation is available online at: www.ctl.msstate.edu/technologies/mycourses/ CTL will announce future training dates and new workshop titles during the fall semester when they are scheduled. Please check the CTL Web site for more information. Custom scheduled trainings may be arranged for departments with five or more interested participants.

Need CTL Help?

Instructional Technology assistance from CTL is available from 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday by calling 325-1403. This fall CTL is experiencing high call volumes resulting in a 101% increase in tickets and a 26% increase in the number of calls for a fall semester startup. If you experience long wait times, please check our Web site at ctl.msstate.edu. Many of the FAQs on the Web site will provide answers to your questions with posted documentation. In addition, workshops and seminars handouts are also posted for further assistance.

When calling the CTL for help, please have the following information available:

1. Your NetID
2. Your course CRN if you are calling about myMedia or myCourses
3. A detailed explanation of the problem you are experiencing

There are times when all of the CTL lines may be busy assisting other clients. When this occurs, your call will be directed to the ITS Help Desk. It is important that you allow the Help Desk consultant to take your contact information and the reason for your call. A ticket will immediately be created and placed in the CTL queue, which is closely monitored. You will receive assistance in a much more timely fashion if you follow this procedure.

Get with the Program!

We all need time to recharge our batteries or to expand our perspective. There are a number of programs and institutes that you can attend that will allow you to do just that. EDUCAUSE, a nonprofit organization devoted to the effective use of information technology, sponsors a number of institutes and workshops. More information about the following opportunities is available at their Web site at www.educause.edu.

- EDUCAUSE Institute Learning Technology Leadership Program
- EDUCAUSE Institute Management Program
- Frye Leadership Institute
- EDUCAUSE Institute Leadership Program

The Harvard Graduate School of Education also sponsors a number of development opportunities. Additional information is available at www.gse.harvard.edu/ppe/highered/index.html.

- Performance Assessment in Higher Education
- 2009 Leadership Institute for Academic Librarians
- Harvard Seminar for Experienced Presidents
- IEM: Institute for Educational Management
- Connecting the Mind, Brain and Education
- MDP: Management Development Program
- MLE: Institute for Management and Leadership in Education 2009
- Harvard Seminar for New Presidents

The Fulbright Program sponsors hundreds of scholars each year through the Traditional Fulbright Scholar Program, the Fulbright Specialist Program, the Fulbright Distinguished Chairs Program and other programs. Additional information, including application deadlines, can be found online at www.cies.org/US_scholars/.

And, of course, there's a sabbatical. Applications for fall 2009 and spring 2010 sabbaticals are due in the Provost's office by January 12, 2009. For more information on some of these opportunities, be sure to attend the CTL Brown Bag Lunch: Escape From Starkville: Sabbaticals and Other Mid-career Opportunities on November 19, 2008. For more information or to register, go to the CTL Web site at ctl.msstate.edu.

Grisham Master Teacher Series

Dr. Robert Reese, Associate Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering at Mississippi State University, delivered the Grisham Master Teacher Series Lecture this past April, hosted by The Center for Teaching and Learning. His lecture entitled "A View on Textbook Authoring and its Classroom Impact." A podcast of Dr. Reese's presentation is available online at mymedia.msstate.edu under the CTL listings.





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FALL 2008

Center Happenings

Seminars

The Center for Teaching and Learning is offering one hour teaching and learning workshops this Fall in 336 Etheredge Hall Conference Room. The Fall 2008 seminars include:

October 22, 2008	Teaching with PowerPoint Effectively
November 5, 2008	Developing a Course Syllabus
November 13, 2008	Developing a Teaching Portfolio
November 20, 2008	Effective Classroom Management

Brown Bags

The Center for Teaching and Learning offers three Brown Bag sessions each semester. The Brown Bag sessions cover timely topics related to teaching and learning at MSU. Each session consists of a distinguished panel that are experts on a topic. The attendees are served a light lunch (while it lasts) during the event. The remaining Fall 2008 Brown Bags sessions topics and dates include:

October 15, 2008	Impossible Parents, Clingy Students: What To Do
November 19, 2008	Escape from Starkville: Sabbaticals & Other Mid-Career Opportunities

The Brown Bags are held in the King Seminar room in McCain Hall room 150. The sessions are scheduled from noon to 1:00 with networking and lunch beginning at 11:30.

Registration is encouraged for all the events listed. For more information or to register, please visit ctl.msstate.edu.



myMedia, the MSU podcast system, allows instructors to podcasting with ease, as well as, providing a place to store large media files for their courses. Additionally, myMedia is integrated with myBanner, allowing faculty to mark their courses to be placed in the system. myMedia works in conjunction with myCourses, but also can be used to house events. The Center for Teaching and Learning provides training sessions and online documentation. For more information, go to ctl.msstate.edu.

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