

A newsletter for those
who teach at
Brigham Young University

From the BYU Faculty Center

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To Improve the University
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B Y U

**Faculty
Center**

4450 Wilkinson Student Center
Provo, UT 84602-2700
(801) 378-7419 • Fax (801) 378-7467
faculty_center@byu.edu
<http://www.byu.edu/tmcubcs/fc/fc.htm>

Editor: lynn_sorenson@byu.edu

Library Resources: Teaching and Learning Tools

The Harold B. Lee Library addition and most of the renovations are complete. Are these marvelous resources part of BYU courses and curricula or solely the domain of “ivory-tower” faculty and dogged dissertation researchers? Are well-designed library activities helping all (or even most) BYU students “enlarge their intellects by developing . . . the basic tools of learning” (*Aims of a BYU Education*)?

This issue of *Focus* features collaboration among faculty and librarians to help students develop “skills, breadth, and depth” through “intellectually enlarging” (*Aims*) library endeavors. This article is by no means exhaustive but instead suggests a variety of effective course activities that have been conceived by BYU faculty and librarians.

Enter to Learn

Statistics Professor Dennis Eggett does not *send* his students to the library to learn about resources. He goes *with* them. Early in the semester he and physical sciences librarian John Christensen meet Eggett’s entering graduate students for a class period at the Lee Library. As Christensen orients the students, Eggett points out particularly relevant elements, underscores concepts Christensen demonstrates, and “throws in his own two cents.” Eggett knows exactly what the students saw, heard, and did there—eliminating second-guessing the experience. Eggett says, “This way I know the students are aware of the resources and how to access them. I feel confident in making assignments, and they gain confidence in their research skills.” One of Eggett’s graduate students said he has used the skills Eggett and Christensen introduced in that early library visit in subsequent classes and for thesis research.

A trip to the library with students is especially valuable now because of all the renovations and the relocation of many materials. Many faculty are spoiled by Web resources, by virtual libraries, and particularly by the time-saving Document Delivery Services (8-3624). So visiting the library with students may be the only time many faculty experience the Lee Library in person.

Another faculty member who goes with her students to the Lee Library is teacher education professor Eula Monroe. Among other things, she and education librarian Tom Wright help students become familiar with databases of the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) and ways to access them—both in the library and from off-site locations.

In addition, Monroe works with Laurette Vance, supervisor of the Education Learning Resource Center (LRC). She reserves readings for Monroe’s students and makes available to them curricular materials like those they may encounter in the future as classroom teachers.

(continued)

One of Monroe's students explained that "it had been a long time since freshman English," when she had been introduced very different library resources. She found Monroe's library assignments "very helpful and very effective." Another student commented that Monroe "never gives 'busy work'...but plans every assignment to make sure it is worth our time."

Monroe's regular course assignments require that students accomplish appropriate tasks according to specified criteria—and then "go beyond" in some way. These extensions often require the library resources/skills that Monroe and Wright introduced earlier. Because students are well acquainted with library assets, they are resourceful in designing these projects that go beyond their regular course work.

Monroe, faculty advisor to the Baptist Student Union, likes to connect with her LDS students by quoting from the Doctrine and Covenants as one rationale for extending oneself—both academically and spiritually:

For behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant; wherefore he receiveth no reward.

Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness. [D&C 58:26–27]

Spiritually Strengthening

Dale LeBaron, (Religious Education) also makes good use of the library to enhance student learning—particularly in RelC 333, "Teachings of the Living Prophets." He said, "I evaluate this course every semester. The research papers, which include library assignments, are always highly rated; so I consistently assign them. Besides learning teachings of the living prophets, one of the important objectives of the course is for students to learn how to access those resources for themselves."

LeBaron assigns four short research papers during the semester. Students research answers to questions about current social issues (e.g. abortion, pornography). They locate and copy sources, highlighting General Authority statements that address issues they are researching. In addition, they formulate and write personal insights and conclusions about their research.

In order to find First Presidency communiqués and other General Authority statements, students need many sources. Most discover their own back issues of the *Ensign*

are inadequate for this project. Enter Gary Gillum. Religion librarian Gillum responds to LeBaron's invitations to visit his RelC 333 classes early in the semester for a research orientation. Gillum helps students become acquainted with numerous resources available to research LDS positions and policies: *Index to Periodicals of the Church*; *BYU Speeches of the Year*; *Scripture Citation Index*; and a couple dozen important reference books.

Gillum says he enjoys sharing the resources available to students at the Lee Library and ways students can access them there and from the Internet. He said, "It's delightful to see these students develop library skills for their religious education pursuits and then see these same skills applicable to so many of their other classes and life interests."

Lifelong Learning

Chemical sciences librarian Kierstin Child says of Professor Kay Franz (Food Science and Nutrition): "[She] is a frequent library user herself and realizes the value of library research skills. Therefore she makes it a point to include a [unit] on library research for [her nutritional biochemistry class]." Franz wants to expand her students' horizons as they discover

more and more resources—abstracts, citation indices, electronic databases, and whole libraries that can be accessed through interlibrary loan.

After the library unit and activities—which include a class visit, a demonstration by Child, and individual research—students write research papers using these newly discovered resources. These students acquire important library skills and come to view the librarian as a valuable resource person. One student commented that the library assignments were "helpful. [They] helped me find resources that I probably wouldn't have otherwise." Another said, "The library learning is worth the time."

Child continues: "Because Franz understands that library resources are often updated and that there are new research tools becoming available, she and I meet together before each semester to ensure the assignment(s), resources, etc., are accurate and up-to-date. This minimizes frustration for [all of us]."

Franz considers the nutritional biochemistry class "a survival course" for seniors who will soon be learning on their own—away from university classrooms and laboratories. These students are now better prepared and on their way "to continue learning throughout their lives" (*Aims*). ■



Harold B. Lee Library addition, fall 1999

Creating Effective Library Assignments

Course-related or course-integrated library assignments are excellent ways to introduce students to information-gathering and evaluation skills. The Department of Library Instruction and Information Literacy (LI&IL) in the Lee Library can help instructors develop library assignments that offer meaningful, positive, library learning experiences. Some ideas for creating effective library assignments are given here, followed by suggestions for alternatives to the traditional short research paper.

- *Contact your subject specialist.* Librarians with expertise in various academic subjects are available to help plan effective library assignments. For a list of subject specialists go to the BYLINE home page and select “How to Use the Library,” then “Faculty Guide,” and finally “Subject Specialists.”

- *Schedule an instruction session.* Bring your class to the library for instruction on how to effectively use library resources in your subject area. You and your subject librarian can decide on the date and time. The librarian will schedule an appropriate instruction room.

- *Assume minimal library knowledge.* Students will approach your assignment(s) from a wide range of information-gathering experience and skills. For example, some may know how to use the catalog to find books by author or title but might be unfamiliar with subject or keyword searching. Others may know how to surf the World Wide Web for social or consumer purposes, but they may not know how to use it for academic research.

Encourage students who have not participated in a first-year writing program at BYU to take the taped library tour (available from the Learning Resource Center, level 4). Also suggest that those who are unfamiliar with BYLINE read the *Library Research Skills* booklet available at the general reference desk (level 3).

- *Determine feasibility.* Work through the library assignment(s) to make sure the instructions are clear and that the library’s resources are adequate. Provide a copy of each assignment and due dates to the appropriate reference desk.

- *Establish deadlines.* If the assignment is an extended project, establish deadlines for different stages to help students avoid procrastination by pacing their work.

- *Integrate technology.* If students will need to use copy machines, computer resources, learning resource center equipment, or microfilm/microfiche readers, make sure they know what they are, where they are located, how to use them, and where to ask for help.

- *Allow for variety.* Allow students to choose a specific

subject within a broad range of topics so that a large number of students are not looking for the same library materials at the same time. If the assignment requires students to access one specific resource, put it on reserve or have it set aside at the appropriate reference desk.

- *Encourage critical thinking.* Choose assignments that require integration of knowledge rather than “scavenger hunt” assignments, which generally do not teach the research process or require students to evaluate resources. A better approach is to design assignments that require students to compare articles in popular and scholarly journals, work from both primary and secondary sources, evaluate commercial and educational Web sites, and so forth.

Assignments That Teach Valuable Skills

As an alternative to the traditional short research paper, the following suggestions for library assignments teach many valuable skills, including evaluation of sources, critical and creative thinking, search techniques, and organizing and synthesizing information.

1. Locate a popular magazine article, then find a scholarly journal article on the same subject.

Compare the two for content, style, bias, etc. Use one electronic index and one print index to locate the articles.

2. Compile an annotated bibliography instead of a fully written paper. If it includes Web sites, require students to list the sites they rejected and tell why.

3. Read an editorial, then find factual information to support or refute the opinions expressed.

4. Analyze the content, tone, style, and audience of three journals in a particular discipline.

For more ideas and information, visit the LI&IL offices (2227 HBLL) or call Sandy Tidwell (8-8981), Maralyn Harmston (8-7089), or Martin Raish (8-2813).

Acknowledgments: Ideas above were gleaned from the Bibliographic Instruction Discussion Forum, owned and moderated since 1990 by Martin Raish and hosted since January 1999 at BYU. Special thanks to Lise M. Dyckman (St. Mary’s Medical Center, San Francisco), Steve Herro (St. Norbert College), and Monica Ollendorf (State University of West Georgia). ■

Great IDEA Gets Even Better

EVALUATION SYSTEM REVAMPED TO REFLECT CURRENT RESEARCH

After several years of providing the formative evaluation system, *Individual Development & Educational Assessment* (IDEA), the Faculty Center is happy to announce that IDEA has been updated this year to reflect the very latest research on college teaching and learning. The IDEA Center at Kansas State University has issued a new student survey form, a new type of faculty report, and other innovations to help faculty “get a handle” on their students’ learning. With the IDEA

evaluation, teachers indicate their course objectives and receive student responses to discern how well the objectives are achieved in a given course. Results of this student survey are completely confidential—available only to each individual instructor by request and to IDEA system coordinator, Lynn Sorenson, Assistant Director of the Faculty Center. When the reports are returned from KSU, she and the faculty member “navigate” the report together and look for resources to enhance student learning.

The IDEA System “In Action”

Instructors designate their course objectives, weighting each one. The instructor arranges for the students to complete the IDEA survey in one of the last class periods of the semester. Among other things, students estimate how frequently their instructor uses the teaching methods that research has shown to enhance student learning. (See inset above.)

IDEA provides a variety of options to collect a wide range of data. Instructors have the option of designing up to eighteen personalized questions. For example, one can survey the students about the effectiveness of the

course in addressing *The Aims of a BYU Education*.

In addition, Larry Dahl, (Religious Education) and Lynn Sorenson (Faculty Center) have developed an optional set of questions teachers can use to survey the spiritual/ethical impact of their courses.

IDEA is also a good way to assess the effectiveness of innovations. Maeser Teaching Award winner Lora Beth Brown (Food Science and Nutrition) was a regular user of IDEA for several years. Then she and Professor John Hill decided to initiate a number of innovations in “Essentials of Human Nutrition.” Brown said, “The IDEA evaluations gave us important baseline data about the course before

implementing the innovations. Then through each step of the change process, IDEA helped us see successes and areas we wanted to ‘tweak’. Now I am looking forward to using the new IDEA to systematically stay in touch with how our pedagogy is affecting students.”

Requesting IDEA

The Faculty Center will send instructors everything they need to use IDEA. Contact the Faculty Center now at 8-7419 or faculty_center@byu.edu with the following information:

- Instructor name
- Course(s) and section(s)
- Number of students in *each* section
- Office address
- Phone number
- E-mail address

After receiving the materials, faculty should arrange for someone else to administer the anonymous, confidential surveys and send them to the Faculty Center at 4450 WSC. The Faculty Center has them processed at Kansas State, and they are returned in about a month.

The IDEA system is available to all teachers at BYU; there is no charge to the individual, department, or college. The University bears the cost of this valuable service as campus-wide support for effective teaching and learning. ■

IDEA SURVEY FORM -- STUDENT REACTIONS TO INSTRUCTION AND COURSES

Your thoughtful answers to these questions will provide helpful information to your instructor.

Describe the frequency of your instructor's teaching procedures, using the following code:
1--Hardly Ever 2--Occasionally 3--Sometimes 4--Frequently 5--Almost Always

The Instructor:

1. Asked students to help each other understand ideas or concepts.
2. Encouraged student-faculty interaction outside of class (office visits, phone calls, e-mail).
3. Scheduled course work in ways which encouraged students to stay up-to-date in the course.
4. Involved students in "hands on" projects such as research, case studies, or "real world" projects.
5. Provided timely and frequent feedback on tests, reports, projects, etc. to help students learn.
6. Gave tests, projects, etc. that covered the most important points of the course.
7. Asked students to share ideas and experiences with those of differing backgrounds.
8. Stimulated students to intellectual effort beyond that required by most courses.
9. Encouraged students to use multiple resources to improve understanding.
10. Gave projects, tests, or assignments that required original or creative thinking.
11. Inspired students to set and achieve goals which really challenged them.
12. Demonstrated the importance and significance of the subject.
13. Introduced stimulating ideas about the subject.
14. Made it clear how each topic fit into the course.
15. Related course materials to real life situations.
16. Displayed a personal interest in students and their learning.
17. Formed "teams" or "discussion groups" to facilitate learning.
18. Explained the reasons for criticisms of students' work.
19. Explained course material clearly and concisely.

Better Endings: What to Do on the Last Day of Class

Most of us have seen tips on what to do the first day of class, but we don't often think about the importance of the last day as an opportunity for students to reflect on and synthesize their learning. Here are some suggestions that might make the closing of a course as memorable as the opening.

Syllabus. Use the syllabus as a tool for course review.

Flowchart. Ask students to create a flowchart or to graph relationships among concepts learned.

Metaphor. Students present (graphically, verbally, or with an object) a metaphor for the subject of the class (or one of the topics).

Definition. Ask students to work in pairs or trios to write a response to the question "What is _____?" (e.g., an organism, anthropology, post-Modernism).

Videotape. As a review tool, show videotapes of student presentations recorded earlier in the semester. (Popcorn optional.) Both the student presenters and the teacher can emphasize or add to important elements of the videotaped presentations.

Assignment. Hand out a post-course assignment indicating future activities in which you expect students to engage because of what they learned in the course.

Game. Play a game of College Bowl or Jeopardy as an exam-review tool.

Letter. Invite students to write to you three months hence, telling one thing they learned in the class that they have used or had occasion to reflect on. Supply postcards or envelopes to mail the letters.

Title/Review. Have students think of your class as a movie or a book. Have them title it and write a review.

Learning from others. Have each student tell one thing he or she learned from another member of the class.

Advice. Ask students to write letters to future students in the course, in which they describe helpful learning strategies and offer advice for success in the course. Deliver the letters randomly to your new students.

Reflection. Reflect on and describe what *you* (as the instructor) learned from these students and from teaching this course. ■

Compiled from suggestions found in:

"Better Endings." 1997. *Teaching at UNL* (University of Nebraska at Lincoln), vol. 19, no. 3.

"How to End Courses with a Bang." 1995. *The Teaching Professor*, vol. 9, no. 5.

Maier, Mark H., and Ted Panitz. 1996. "End on a High Note: Better Endings for Classes and Courses." *College Teaching*, vol. 44, no. 4.

Merritt, J. G., and M. Kaplan. 1999. "The Last Day of Class." Presentation at the 24th Annual Conference of the Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education, Lake Harmony, Pennsylvania.

Guidelines for Evaluating Collaborative Learning

TRAV D. JOHNSON

Faculty Development Coordinator

BYU Faculty Center



Cooperative learning has become common practice in higher education. And with good reason. Numerous studies have shown the benefits of collaborative learning (Davis, 1993; McKeachie, 1999). But how can teachers evaluate cooperative learning? How can work on group projects be accurately and fairly graded?

Grade Students Collectively

Grading students collectively is often both necessary and appropriate. An instructor may assign one grade for a group product to all members of the group. It is usually wise to also assess individual learning and contributions to the group as described below. This combination of grading procedures values the importance of collaborative work while recognizing difference in individual contribution. Davis (1993) recommends the group grade account for only a portion of a student's overall grade in the course. This helps ensure that individual grades are not unfairly affected by varying performance levels of others.

Assess Individual Student Learning

Researchers generally agree that even students working in groups need some form of individual accountability (Davis, 1993; Johnson, 1994). Instructors may use traditional assessments (e.g., exams, papers, critiques) to discern what students learned through group work. Bruffee (1993) suggests students write individual essays or reports from which teachers evaluate individual learning that occurs during group activities.

Assess Each Student's Contribution to the Group

Assessing each student's contribution to the group may be accomplished by (1) instructor observations during group work; (2) student evaluations of the type, quality, and level of contribution of group members; and (3) student evaluations of their own contributions to the group. In order to evaluate their own contributions, students must necessarily review course materials and group processes; this procedure—in and of itself—is a valuable, culminating, learning activity. ■

Bruffee, K. A. (1993). *Collaborative learning: Higher education, interdependence, and the authority of knowledge*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press.

Davis, B. G. (1993). *Tools for teaching*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Johnson, D. W., Johnson, R. T., and Smith, K. A. (1994). "Basic elements of cooperative learning." In K. Feldman and M. Paulsen, (eds.), *Teaching and learning in the classroom* (pp. 317–24). Needham Heights, MA: Ginn Press.

McKeachie, W. J. (1999). *Teaching tips*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Oaks on Fundamental Teaching Principles

In the October 1999 general conference, former BYU President Dallin H. Oaks stated that “every member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is, or will be, a teacher.” He quoted David O. McKay, who said, “No greater responsibility can rest upon any [one of us] than to be a teacher of God’s children” (*Gospel Ideals* [1953]). Certainly at BYU this is the case—perhaps even more so than elsewhere.

Elder Oaks introduced two new Churchwide programs to support improved teaching, and he suggested that “all good teaching is based on certain fundamental principles.” To IMPROVE THE UNIVERSITY, let us open discussion here about some of those principles as they relate to university teaching.

Love: Elder Oaks suggested that loving God’s children—our students—is requisite to good teaching. He said, “Those who teach out of love will be magnified as instruments in the hands of Him whom they serve.”

He directed teachers to “concentrate entirely on those being taught. . . Focusing on the needs of the students” eliminates “self-promotion [by the teacher] or self-interest”—decided deterrents to learning.

He admonished teachers to “prepare diligently and strive to use the most effective means” of teaching. In higher education, this might suggest evaluating one’s teaching; following the examples of excellent teachers; soliciting their

feedback when possible; becoming acquainted with the research, theory and practice of effective teaching; and—certainly, based upon his first two principles—valuing students as active participants in the teaching/learning community.

Finally, in defining an excellent teacher, Elder Oaks suggested he or she “is concerned with the results of his or her teaching, and such a teacher will measure the success of teaching. . . by its impact on. . . the learners.” (Also see Henry B. Eyring, “The Power of Teaching Doctrine,” *Ensign*, May 1999.)



A. . . teacher should always teach with love for the students.

—Dallin H. Oaks

The editor invites discussion here of BYU experiences and examples of these principles in action—and others Elder Oaks suggested (see Dallin H. Oaks, “Gospel Teaching,” *Ensign*, November 1999). The Faculty Center encourages campuswide dialogue about these principles over lunch tables, in department meetings, with colleagues, and with students. ■

We invite your written responses or any short pieces on other topics of interest that will improve the university. Submissions (up to 500 words) should be sent no later than Friday, March 3, 2000, to Lynn Sorenson, *Editor*, FOCUS ON FACULTY, 4450 WSC, faculty_center@byu.edu.

FOCUS ON FACULTY is an occasional newsletter published by the Faculty Center for the teachers at Brigham Young University (full- and part-time faculty, student instructors, and teaching assistants). Its purpose is to serve as a medium for exchanging ideas about teaching and scholarship and for sharing information about faculty development activities. Editor Lynn Sorenson welcomes your ideas, contributions, and comments.

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BYU Faculty Center

4450 Wilkinson Student Center
 Brigham Young University
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