

Teaching & Learning

Volume 21, Number 2, Winter 2011

Another Nessie Sighting!

Margaret-Anne Bennett, Director, CAID

In the 2011 winter term, Saint Mary's students will again be invited to participate in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE).

For years, universities have been grappling with complex and interrelated issues – student recruitment, engagement, retention, and success. In the past, attention and resources have largely focused on recruitment. Universities increasingly recognize that

we need to focus our attention and resources on the students we recruit – on helping them develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will keep them in university, engage them in their academic programs and activities, and help them persist to graduation. How do we determine if, and how well, we are doing that?

During the 2008 winter term, Saint Mary's participated for the first time in the National Survey of Student

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Engagement (NSSE, pronounced 'nessie'). Along with 47 other Canadian universities, we heard from students about their participation in enriching educational experiences and campus activities, their interactions with faculty and other students, as well as their satisfaction with academic advising and administrative support services. Over the ensuing twelve months there were many opportunities to share NSSE results – a campus wide session in April 2009, as well as invited presentations to the Arts Executive Council, the Sobey School of Business Faculty Council, Student Services, the Working Group on Student Success, SMUSA, Division of Continuing Education, the Department of Sociology and Criminology, and the Deans' Council. In April 2009, Saint Mary's hosted a regional symposium "Enhancing the Student Experience: Atlantic Canadian Symposium on The National Survey of Student Engagement." These meetings and workshops provided a forum where faculty, academic administrators, staff and students discussed and identified challenges and opportunities that

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Courtesy Saint Mary's Public Affairs



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Building Bridges: Teaching International Students in a Canadian Classroom

Kathi Thompson, M.Ad.Ed.,
ESL Support Specialist, TESL Centre

In mid-September, barely past the flurry of beginning a new semester, 14 faculty members attended a workshop entitled Building Bridges: Teaching International Students in a Canadian Classroom. Young adults faced with working in a fast-paced global economy now seek educational opportunities in English language environments that will set them apart from their peers by developing academic competence within this competitive climate. At present, Saint Mary's academic culture is home to a burgeoning population of international students and EFL sojourners. Through the Centre for Academic and Instructional Development (CAID), Building Bridges offered faculty some insight into the transition students parachuting into new academic surroundings now make, after leaving behind intimate familial ties, friendships, and support networks. The transition is often very difficult:

I was stressed and homesick because my family is far away and I didn't know what was happening to them. I did not know anyone, so I was lonely.

Based on her recent Master's thesis, Kathi Thompson, TESL Centre, EFL Support Specialist described differences in expectations between faculty and international student perspectives and facilitated dialogue among faculty in attendance.

While the effects of a global economy are creating widespread opportunities in higher education they are, at the same time, creating stress for faculty and students alike. In the classroom it is faculty who bear the responsibility for domestic and international students' experience of an intercultural environment; where respect for diversity and experiential knowledge of global citizenship is within reach.

Learning to navigate in an intercultural teaching and learning climate requires understanding significant challenges facing international EFL sojourners. Repeatedly students express fears:

I was afraid to go to some professors because I didn't have a strong self-esteem and because it was a new environment for me. English is my second language, and I found it hard to interpret questions; it was my first time to travel out of my homeland.

These students need opportunities to form their identities within a new language and academic culture, thereby increasing their confidence. Taylor (2008) points out that "engaging learners in classroom practices that assist in the development of critical reflection, through the use of reflective journaling, classroom dialogue, and critical questioning" is essential.

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Shifting focus from individual learning to a situational context, the arena in which learning takes place plays a crucial role. Lave and Wenger (1991) examine the idea of situated learning and propose that it involves a process of engagement in a "community of practice." What is relevant for EFL sojourners is the lengthy process necessary for becoming part of such a community. Built on relationships of trust and constructing identities in relation to these communities, individuals move from peripheral into full participation. Learning in this way is not the acquisition of knowledge by

Teaching and Learning at Saint Mary's

A forum on teaching and learning sponsored by the Quality of Teaching Committee and edited and produced by the Centre for Academic and Instructional Development. Articles and responses by faculty, students and staff are welcome.

Quality of Teaching Committee Members 2010/11

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individuals but more a process of social participation. Herein, the nature of the situation has a critical influence on the process of achieving full participation. "This social process, includes, indeed it subsumes, the learning of knowledgeable skills" (Lave & Wenger, p. 29).

Scrutinizing the concept of situated learning and communities of practice raises questions about how international EFL sojourners move from peripheral to full participation. How can we create classrooms that engender this movement?

The following tips for engaging international EFL students were some of those identified by the workshop participants:

- **A simple smile:** International students are often hesitant to speak to professors, reporting that professors are very serious. A warm smile can open the door; encouraging students to feel comfortable.
- **Knowing and using student names:** Asking students to make name cards, even in large classes, helps students to "make a connection" with a professor and with other students.
- **Pair & share:** Answering a question in front of peers and professors to the full class can be very intimidating. Providing time for discussion in pairs before asking students to share their ideas can lower the risk involved and allow students to organize their thoughts before speaking.
- **Group work projects:** Mixing students in small groups for discussions and team projects can generate less stressful interaction than participating in large groups. However, group/team projects need to be introduced as beneficial for all students seeking intercultural competence. Assistance clarifying roles, defining expectations of individual group members and discussing group decision-making helps to ensure successful group activities.

- **Humour:** Using humour (especially when directed at oneself) can create a relaxed learning environment and help a professor be seen as "approachable."

If we embrace the common belief that humans learn from within relationships – with self, fellow learners, teachers, and mentors; with ideas and the content being studied; and with the larger community – developing sensitivity to these relationships then becomes essential (English, 2000; Rossiter, 2005). The ability to encourage these seminal relationships plays a pivotal role in sustaining longer-term motivation and has far reaching implications for academic success. In the classroom, it becomes incumbent upon faculty to engender this transition, essential that students embrace these relationships and critical that the development of skills in intercultural competence is supported as an investment in Saint Mary's continuing

academic excellence. Training for intercultural competence could be considered the most valued ability needed for participation in the 21st century.

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The Center for Academic and Instructional Development and the Quality of Teaching Committee are pleased to provide online subscriptions to two highly informative newsletters for all Saint Mary's faculty and staff.

The Teaching Professor is a lively, informative newsletter that provides ideas and insight for educators who are passionate about teaching.

Online Classroom explores the challenges and opportunities presented by this dynamic, fast-growing teaching medium, and helps educators to stay current with the latest trends in online learning.

To subscribe, please contact the CAID, by phoning 420-5088, or e-mailing caid@smu.ca.

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IDEAS FOR EFFECTIVE ONLINE INSTRUCTION

Centre for Academic Technologies: Now Serving Faculty... and Students

Carol Roderick, Centre for Academic and Instructional Development

As part of the Centre for Academic and Instructional Development (CAID), the Centre for Academic Technologies (CAT) supports the effective use of technology for teaching and learning at Saint Mary's University. Traditionally, our services have been available to faculty members and faculty support staff. With the move to the Atrium in January 2010, we also began offering technology oriented services to students.

In summer 2010, we invited faculty members from across campus to participate in a survey that focused on identifying what technologies students need to work with to perform well in their courses. Ninety-one faculty members participated – a big thank you to each of you. The results of the survey will help us to understand and respond more effectively to students' academic needs.

Here are a few survey result highlights:

- More than 50% of participating faculty indicated that students need to use e-mail, SMUport, MSWord and PowerPoint to perform well in their courses.

- Approximately 50% of participating faculty indicated that students need to know how to use data projection unit as well as PowerPoint. It was also identified that the main challenges students face with presentations may not be the technology, but rather their presentation skills (confidence, poise, delivery, etc.)
- Over seventy-five (76%) percent of participating faculty members indicated that they use course management software – either Blackboard (50%), Course Tools (20%), or Moodle (6%) (an open-source course management software). Thirty percent (30%) stated that they use the P: Drive to post class files. A small percentage of faculty members also use Elluminate for real-time online lectures or for its lecture-capture (recording) abilities (3%).
- Participating faculty thought the most effective ways to offer our services to students include: drop-in service at the CAT, scheduled



individual and group sessions, classroom presentations (10-15 minutes), and online tutorials.

Given these results, we are developing introductory workshops for students that will include SMUport, MSWord, PowerPoint, and Blackboard. Intermediate and advanced workshops will also be offered for MSWord and PowerPoint. In the meantime, please let your students know that they can come to the Centre for Academic Technologies (CAT) for one-on-one coaching in any technology that they need to excel in your courses. In the next academic year, we will explore partnerships to help students develop their oral presentation skills.

In the next few months, a process will be implemented to increase accessibility to Blackboard to manage your courses. Blackboard is a secure alternative to the P: drive, allowing you to post files that you would like to distribute in your courses. Blackboard also includes a variety of interactive tools that can be activated (or deactivated) to suit your needs. Some of these tools include: e-mail, discussions, learning modules, chat, assignments, grade book, and announcements.

Remember, we are here for you. We continue to offer and expand our services for faculty members – whether it is getting started with Blackboard, scanning multiple choice tests, or learning new technologies. Feel free to stop by the Centre for Academic Technologies (CAT), part of the Centre for Academic and Instructional Development (CAID), 107 Atrium. Hours: Monday – Thursday 9am-7pm and Friday 9am-5pm.

Dalhousie Conference on University Teaching and Learning & The Canadian eLearning Conference

**Pre-conference Workshops,
April 26, 2011,
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Interested in Enhancing your Teaching?

Attend the 28th Faculty Development Summer Institute (FDSI) at UPEI, August 1-5, 2011.

For the past several years, the Quality of Teaching Committee and the Deans have jointly sponsored up to three Saint Mary's faculty members to participate in the UPEI Faculty Development Summer Institute on Active Learning and Teaching. Each year, participating faculty members derive considerable value from the Institute.

"Even if the only benefit had been a week in the presence of dedicated and interested teachers of university students, it would have been well worth it!"

Dr. Roby Austin, Astronomy & Physics, 2010 Participant

"More than simply an intensive five-day training session, the UPEI Teaching Institute is a learning experience like no other. I can think of no better forum for discussing and practicing active learning than among this dynamic group of educators."

Dr. Valerie Creelman, Marketing, 2010 Participant

This summer, the Institute will celebrate its 28th year of great faculty professional development. It remains the only one of its kind in Canada. The overall goal of the Institute is to improve teaching and learning by supporting teachers to learn and use active learning in their classrooms.

To learn more, visit:
<http://lifelonglearning.upei.ca/professionaldevelopment/FDSInstitute>

If you would like to attend, please submit a letter of interest to the Quality of Teaching Committee (c/o Centre for Academic and Instructional Development). In your letter, please state your interest and what you hope to gain from the Institute. Letters should be submitted before Friday, February 28th, 2011.

Thinking about Students' Time Management

Diane Crocker, Sociology & Criminology

We have all heard it from students before: "I just don't have time to do this work." Or, "You don't understand – I work full time and am taking four courses."

If you're like me, you have rolled your eyes thinking, 'wait until you have a real job, two kids and a mortgage...' You may have told students that they must learn to manage their time. If you're like me, you have also tried to be clear about expectations in your courses. I have always told students that they need to spend twice as much time outside of class on coursework as they spend inside. Of course, neither of these approaches has much effect, except to maybe make my students feel that I just don't understand them.

An experience from a few years back helped me put my well-intentioned advice to time-pressured students into perspective. I was working as a coach with students in the Faculty of Arts. In one of our first meetings, the students and I would draw up a calendar. They would write down all their courses and other commitments, and we would look at when they had time for school work and how to best manage the time they had. I was shocked to learn that some students had never used a day planner. I was even more shocked by how truly busy these students were.

In one instance, a varsity athlete filled out the calendar with his courses and his sports-related commitments. The calendar was full – every day for seven or eight hours a day this student was either in class, at a practice or at some other scheduled activity for his team. He truly did not have time that could be managed.

Through this experience, my eyes were also opened to how course design can create problems for students. When we looked at their four month calendars, including all the evaluation components, we saw two clumps of work: one at mid-term and another at the end of the term or during exam time. This was expected. What surprised me was how their grades

were weighted so that almost all their marks came from these two periods. This allowed me to see the big picture impact of having only two evaluation components in my courses.

What did I learn?

Working with these students made me realize how unhelpful it is for me to dismiss their concerns about not enough time. It also allowed me to see how some of our traditional teaching methods exacerbate the challenges students face. I think that we should consider ways to spread evaluation across the semester. This makes sense pedagogically, giving students feedback earlier in our courses and giving them feedback often. It also ensures that students do not get lulled into thinking they have no work for the first five or six weeks of the term. Another idea is to use on-line tools and peer reviewing to ensure that this approach doesn't become a time management problem for us as faculty either.

Since this experience, I have started using in-class quizzes more often. The quizzes are not scheduled in the syllabus, but I give students a week's notice that there will be a quiz.

Each student first takes the quiz individually, and then re-takes the quiz with a group of four or five other students. I then use peer reviewing as part of the assessment. The completed quizzes are redistributed so that each student marks the quiz of someone else. Students get immediate feedback when they complete the quiz as a group and during the time we spend grading the quizzes. This also gives me the chance to answer questions and clarify concepts. Peer reviewing has allowed me to add more evaluation for students without adding to my own workload. It also provides students with a regular barometer of where they stand in the course, keeping them up to date with their readings and, hopefully, spreading their work more evenly around their very full calendars.

Privacy in the Age of Facebook

Marie DeYoung, University Librarian and FOIPOP Administrator

This fall faculty came together for a workshop on Privacy and Confidentiality in the Age of Technology. With the tremendous advances in technology and social networking there are easier and more ways to share information. We explored what new technologies mean for the freedom of information and protection of privacy and specifically, and what this then means for teaching and learning. Here are a few of the questions that we explored:

Q: Can we expect "privacy" on the Internet?

A: This is not an easy question to answer because what privacy means is different for each generation. Consider the different technology user experience of each generation, including the Generation X and the Millennials. While one person may question sharing their credit card information when shopping online, another may not think twice about posting pictures on Facebook of their weekend activities - what one person views as private may be completely different for another.

Q: Can I ask students to upload pictures of themselves to Blackboard so that I can more easily learn their names?

A: Yes, it is reasonable for you to ask students to upload a picture onto Blackboard. Information uploaded to Blackboard is hosted on a secure Saint Mary's server. If everything is working as it should, only students enrolled in the course can access this information. You are not asking students to share a photo with the world, only within the course to encourage community and enhance learning.

Q: Can I use Facebook in my courses?

A: As a faculty member it is essential that you take every precaution to ensure that the personal information of your students is protected. Any information that could potentially identify an individual is considered personal information. This information includes names, addresses, phone numbers, gender, sexual orientation, marital or family status, as well as educational or employment history. It is prohibited to make personal information public according to provincial legislation. If you were to use Facebook in your course, students would need to provide some of their personal



information to a third party (i.e. Facebook) to become users and/or sign on. As a course requirement, this contradicts legislation. Avoid using Facebook or other social networking applications in a way that could make students vulnerable.

Q: What about reference letters for students?

A: If the student asks you to for a letter of reference than you can do so without contravening related legislation. Only disclose factual information or opinion information that can be confirmed by the student. You cannot provide information to prospective employers who contact you without first obtaining permission from the student.

Helpful information and frequently asked questions on the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FOIPOP) can be found at www.smu.ca/administration/foipop. If you have any questions about FOIPOP implications or wish to discuss how new technologies and social networking applications can be used in your teaching and research while minimizing privacy concerns please contact Marie DeYoung at 420-5532 or marie.deyoung@smu.ca.

Quality of Teaching Committee Instructional Development Grants

Do you have an idea for a project that will enhance your instruction, and improve teaching and learning at Saint Mary's? Are you interested in attending a teaching and learning conference, workshop, or seminar... or perhaps organizing a talk or workshop at Saint Mary's focused on teaching and learning?

The Quality of Teaching Committee Instructional Development Grants program supports projects that improve upon or develop new and creative approaches to teaching and learning.

Three types of grants are available:

Small Project Grant – valued up to \$1500
Applications accepted on an ongoing basis

Travel Grant – valued up to \$1500
Applications accepted on an ongoing basis

Teaching/Learning Major Project Award – valued up to \$5000
Application Deadline: Feb. 28th, 2011
(one awarded annually)

Amounts awarded are subject to availability of funds.

Nessie Sighting... continued from cover

contribute to student engagement and success at Saint Mary's University.

A number of campus initiatives have been implemented in response to what we learned from NSSE and other sources. More resources were allocated to student advising. A new Senate Committee on Student Success was formed to "identify, promote, coordinate, and evaluate efforts to improve success among Saint Mary's University students." The Sobey School of Business formed a student engagement committee to review their results. Student Services held a planning retreat to assess their programs and services. There has been a renewed focus on excellence as a hallmark of service from Enrollment Management and other administrative offices. Just this 2010 fall term, the LEAP (Learning, Engagement, Achievement, and Peer Mentors) learning communities program was piloted as a major academic initiative to enhance first year student success. Results from the LEAP pilot will be available later in the semester.

In addition to academic programs and administrative services, campus renewal projects have contributed to greater opportunities for student



Courtesy Saint Mary's Public Affairs

engagement – new classrooms and labs in the Atrium, new and popular collaborative learning space in the Global Learning Commons, and renovated classrooms, labs, and offices in McNally. These projects have provided students with enhanced teaching and learning space and opportunities to build community.

It is time once again to hear from our students. Saint Mary's, along with eleven of our sister institutions in the Maritime Provinces, has signed on to NSSE 2011. During February and March approx. 2200 Saint Mary's first year students and 660 graduating

students will be invited to log on and complete the National Survey of Student Engagement.

In 2008, faculty played an important role in generating student participation in the survey. You can help again this year by encouraging your students to share their opinions and ideas. Further information will be available in early January.

If you have questions about NSSE, please contact Margaret-Anne Bennett, Director, Centre for Academic and Instructional Development (CAID), at margaret-anne.bennett@smu.ca or at 420-5087.

Nominate a Colleague: Saint Mary's University Teaching Awards

Father William A. Stewart, S.J. Medal for Teaching

This award recognizes a faculty member who has made significant contributions to the education of Saint Mary's students through excellence in teaching and service. For award guidelines and nomination deadline, please visit the Alumni Association website:

www.smu.ca/alumni/window/rec_teach.html

Dr. Geraldine Thomas Educational Leadership Award

This award recognizes a faculty member who has provided leadership among colleagues in developing institutional structures and processes, and in pursuing activities that help create an environment at Saint Mary's University in which teaching excellence is fostered and appreciated. For award guidelines, please visit the CAID website:

www.smu.ca/administration/caiddev_awards.html#smu

From Here to the Horizon:

31st Annual Conference of the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education

The Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE) is a vibrant community of academics interested in the improvement of teaching and learning in higher education. The Society sponsors an annual conference, an electronic bulletin board, a national awards program, and publishes a tri-annual newsletter, Green Guides, and Collected Essays on Learning and Teaching. To learn more about STLHE or to join visit: <http://www.stlhe.ca/>

The 2011 STLHE conference will be held at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, SK **June 15-18, 2011**. Look for the call for proposals at <http://www.usask.ca/gmcte/stlhe2011/>



STLHE SAPES

Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education
La société pour l'avancement de la pédagogie dans l'enseignement supérieur

New Faculty Orientation

On August 24th and 25th 2010, the Centre for Academic and Instructional Development and the Quality of Teaching Committee welcomed new

faculty members to Saint Mary's with a day and a half of presentations, discussions and workshops; and an opportunity to meet and

socialize with other new faculty, senior administrators, and support personnel before the academic year began.



Photo: Steve Proctor

Back Row, left to right: Julie Quinn, Psychology; Jonathan White, Psychology; Lou Duggan, Library; Russell Fralich, Management

Front Row, left to right: Janet Stalker, Science Communications; Bernadette Gatien, Psychology; Maryam Dilmaghani, Economics; André Peralta, Modern Languages; John Measor, Political Science; David Gauthier, Vice President, Academic & Research

Saint Mary's to Participate in 2010-2011 National Survey of Student Engagement



The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is an annual survey designed to assess the extent to which students engage in and are exposed to educational practices that correspond to desirable learning outcomes.

During the 2011 winter term (Feb/March), all first year and senior students at Saint Mary's will be invited to participate in the NSSE online survey. Many other universities in the Atlantic region will also be participating in the survey.

The NSSE asks students about:

- their exposure to and participation in effective educational practices
- their use of time in and out of class
- what they believe they have gained from their educational experiences
- the quality of the interactions with faculty and other students
- the extent to which they feel the institution provides a supportive environment

Saint Mary's University first participated in the NSSE in 2008. You can read a summary of the results in the Spring 2009 edition of Teaching and Learning at Saint Mary's archived at: www.smu.ca/administration/caid/documents/TL_MAR_2009WEB_002.pdf

The Centre for Academic and Instructional Development (CAID) will be coordinating the survey for the university. More information will be available to faculty and students during the winter term. If you have questions, please contact Margaret-Anne Bennett, Director, CAID, at 420-5087 or margaret-anne.bennett@smu.ca

Produced by the Centre for Academic and Instructional Development
We welcome your comments and suggestions on this and future issues of Teaching & Learning.

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Please visit our offices, Atrium suites 106 and 107 or online at www.smu.ca/administration/caid