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Volume 15, Number 1, Fall 2004

WMD Found at SMU: But SEEQ, not CBRN

Edna Keeble, Political Science

On October 15, 2004, Dr. Mary Benbow, University of Manitoba, presented a detailed, informative session on the teaching evaluation instrument which Saint Mary's Committee on the Evaluation of Teaching Performance recommended last March to replace the one which has been in use here for the last three decades. The recommended instrument, The Students' Evaluation of Educational Quality (SEEQ), has been in use at the University of Manitoba for a number of years. Dr. Benbow, a faculty member in the Department of Environment and Geography, is also a Faculty Associate of Manitoba's University Teaching Services and, in this role, offers workshops and individual consultations to her colleagues on the use of the SEEQ and on developing Teaching Dossiers.

As I chatted with colleagues during and after Benbow's session, ever aware of current world turmoil, it struck me that Saint Mary's now has its very own WMD — not the chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) variety, of course, but rather an important option — Waiting for Meaningful Discussion. However, this WMD option, in the form of the Student Evaluation of Educational Quality (SEEQ) instrument risks being as elusive and imaginary as it is with its more familiar counterpart.

Drawing from Benbow's presentation, I offer the following reasons for favoring Saint Mary's adoption of the SEEQ:

- that student comments matter;
- that commitment to teaching is primary; and
- that context is crucial.

I direct my comments to colleagues who, like me, are presently in the midst of teaching, already experiencing the highs and the lows, and often embracing on faith (at times rather than reason) that students will have learned what we want them to learn by the end of our course.

Student Comments Matter

Benbow reminded us that student evaluations are the product of the 1960s questioning of traditional authoritative structures during which students demanded a greater say in the university, and they have today become a measure of accountability for what professors do. She indicated that research findings on evaluative instruments suggest that, while they can be instructive, they can also be inconsistent.



Edna Keeble

For example, generally higher ratings tend to be given to elective courses, higher level courses, courses where students have a prior interest, courses taught by more experienced instructors, and courses where the gender of the instructor and student is the same. Interestingly enough, Benbow also drew on the research literature to indicate that higher eval-

uations are evident if they are administered after a short speech by the instructor, if they are not anonymous, and if the instructor remains in the classroom.

Seeing that few (if any) of us at Saint Mary's give a brief speech to our students before the administration of the current evaluative instrument, that students provide their feedback anonymously, and that we are required to leave the classroom while a student hands out and collects the forms, we may already be subject to lower ratings. Yet, when the course is over and our compiled statistical results are received, we find ourselves either breathing a sigh of relief to be faced with an

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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 Office of Instructional Development. Articles and responses by faculty, students and staff are welcome.

Quality of Teaching Committee Members 2004/05

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WMD Found...continued from cover

overall average of 4.5 or finding comfort in our research (and/or service) successes if instead we see a 3.3.

The reality is that, whether we have been teaching for 20 years or 20 days, we care about what our students think about us and about our course. Student evaluations matter, not primarily because they may affect our tenure and promotion prospects in the long-term, but because these evaluations tell us something about us as teachers in the immediate sense.

Commitment to Teaching is Primary

But what does a 4.5 or a 3.3 tell us? It may tell us that we are 'good' or 'bad' teachers, but, as we all know, that judgment call is our own immediate reaction to the number, particularly if we perceive it as negative. We also know that it would not be wholly supported by colleagues, members of the University Review Committee or of the Union Executive, and ultimately ourselves, as would be clearly evident when we put forward our tenure or promotion applications.

As Benbow stated, teaching evaluation instruments can be summative or formative, or both. Summative evaluation stems from an institutional requirement to have a measure in place for making administrative decisions, such as tenure or promotion. Formative evaluation stems from a fundamental commitment to teaching and instructional development, fulfilling in many ways our own individual need to find ways to improve our teaching and, arguably, to put into place the sorts of tangible evidence of 'good' teaching to support administrative decisions. Summative evaluation is essentially all that we have with the current instrument at Saint Mary's. The importance of formative evaluation, according to Benbow, is how



Mary Benbow

and why the University of Manitoba adopted the Student Evaluation of Educational Quality (SEEQ) measure.

Benbow stressed that the SEEQ instrument, developed by psychometrics expert Dr. Herbert Marsh, University of Western Sydney, in the late 1970s, produces reliable and valid data. It was exhaustively researched and has been

tested worldwide in approximately 50,000 courses and with almost one million students. It is currently housed at Curtin University of Technology (<http://lsn.curtin.edu.au/seeq/menu.html>).

While the SEEQ data can be used for summative evaluative purposes, at the University of Manitoba it cannot be analyzed or summarized statistically by the administration although it contains summative questions which ask students to compare the course to the other courses, to compare the instructor to other instructors, and to provide an overall rating of the instructor. Instead, after undertaking a self-rating survey of what they had hoped to accomplish in their courses, individual faculty analyze and compile their SEEQ data with an eye specifically to improving teaching effectiveness. Because SEEQ breaks down individual functions of teaching into separate areas (learning, enthusiasm, organization, group interaction, individual rapport, breadth, examinations, assignments and overall ratings), faculty can identify their strengths and areas for improvement. This identification takes place within the faculty member's particular understanding of his or her priorities in the course. In essence, the SEEQ process is a commitment to both self-reflection on, and self-improvement of, teaching, and the process is continuous.

Because individual faculty members at the University of Manitoba are the only *continued on page 5*

Ideas To Improve Learning

Dr. Donald Woods, Professor Emeritus, McMaster University, Wednesday, November 24, 2004, 2:00 – 4:00pm, Sobey Conference Theatre

Whether you're an experienced professor or new to teaching, whether you're teaching an established course or a brand new course, whether you're pleased with your students' grades this term, or not — at the end of a semester, we often question how much our students have learned from our course. As we begin preparations for the winter term, let's take this opportunity to reflect on our teaching and our students' learning.

At the end of the workshop, you should be able to select at least five practical ideas that will have an extremely positive impact on student learning in your course next term. These ideas will be presented in the overall framework of the 'six elements of effective courses' that improve student learning. The emphasis will be on learning and student success; how to account for the 20 minute

attention span; shifting from 50 minutes of teacher talk; empowering the students with more parts of the learning process; and student assessment...it's more than getting a grade.

Dr. Donald R. Woods

Dr. Don Woods is Professor Emeritus, Department of Chemical Engineering, at McMaster University. He has taught at McMaster since 1970 earning a provincial OCUFA teaching award, a national 3M Teaching Fellowship, and awards for engineering education from around the world.

His research interests include problem-based learning, assessment, improving



Dr. Donald R. Woods

student learning, developing skills in problem solving, group and team work, self-assessment, change management and life-long learning. He is recognized internationally as an academic scholar in teaching, research and administration.

Dr. Woods has conducted over 300 workshops on effective teaching and process skill

development both in North America and abroad. He has over 400 publications including the book *Problem-Based Learning: How To Gain The Most From PBL*. He is currently working on his latest book *Ideas To Improve Learning*. ■

Supporting a Culture of Integrity: Real Challenges / Practical Solutions

Dr. Julia Christensen-Hughes, University of Guelph, Friday, November 26, 2004, 1:30—3:00pm, SB165

Academic integrity is at the heart – the core value – of the academic enterprise. Achieving it requires an ongoing commitment by all levels of the university community. Recent articles in academic journals and the popular press have, however, brought into question our collective success in living this value.

Drawing on the results of a recent Canadian study in which Saint Mary's participated, we will begin with an overview of the academic misconduct behaviours and explanations



Dr. Julia Christensen-Hughes

provided by students; discuss five specific areas of focus for encouraging academic integrity derived from the survey results; reflect on the steps Saint Mary's has taken in support of academic integrity; and identify further actions which might be taken.

Dr. Julia Christensen-Hughes

Dr. Julia Christensen-Hughes is President of the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE), Associate Professor

of Organizational Behaviour and Director, Teaching Support Services (TSS) at the University of Guelph. In collaboration with Don McCabe, Center for Academic Integrity, Duke University, Julia conducted a comprehensive study on academic integrity at the University of Guelph. This project grew into a national study involving over 15 Canadian universities.

An award-winning instructor and experienced facilitator, Julia has conducted numerous workshops for both academic and business audiences. Within the educational domain, her research interests include academic integrity, learner-centredness, universal instructional design, and classroom planning. ■

To register for these sessions, please contact the Office of Instructional Development, oid@smu.ca or call 420-5088. Registration deadline is Monday, November 22 for Woods, November 24 for Christensen-Hughes.

Bones, stones, dirt, and maggots – this is the REAL Forensic archaeology!

Tanya Peckmann, Dept. of Anthropology

On Sunday, May 30th, I boarded my first flight (of four!) on my way to Erie, Pennsylvania. After eight hours, and visiting nearly every airport in the eastern United States, I arrived at my destination. My mission: to participate in the 13th annual Death-Scene Archaeology short course offered by Mercyhurst Archaeological Institute and the Department of Applied Forensic Sciences, Mercyhurst College.

‘What is Death-Scene Archaeology’ you ask? It is Forensic Archaeology — the application of archaeological principles and methods to gather evidence within the constraints of the criminal justice system. Since the focus of forensic archaeology is the medico-legal system, the techniques are basically the same as archaeology but you must pay closer attention to detail as any piece of evidence may be critical to a criminal case.

The first two days of the course were primarily lectures from experts in different fields and many hands-on demonstrations. We learned about the role of the Forensic Anthropologist within the legal system and what should and should not be said in a court of law. We also participated in a Cadaver Dog demonstration — a piece of smelly, raw animal flesh was hidden and the dog was told to ‘go find it’. As she walked up and down the field, sniffing in parallel lines, the trainer explained how the dogs were trained, by whom, how long before being fully trained, and why she was doing what she was doing.

One of the most interesting sessions was forensic entomology. Two deer (road kill) were left for about 2-3 weeks in two completely different environments; one in a shady brush-covered area and the other in an open sunny field. Our goal was to

find each deer (not too hard in the open sunny field — stinky!), record the biological changes that had occurred, and collect entomological evidence — bugs wandering in the area, any flying creatures present, and the coolest part...collecting maggots!! We collected a sample of the maggots and recorded their developmental stage. But, the best part of all was that I got to keep my maggots! I now have a vial full of them sitting on my living room bookshelf — much to the dismay of my husband.

The primary aim of this course was to learn more about forensic archaeology and to provide me with teaching techniques and new ideas to incorporate into my courses this fall. The other aspect of the course focussed on learning ‘how’ to search for forensic sites, evaluation of the significance

of artefacts and features within a forensic scene as compared to an archaeological site, the recovery of site material, and the interpretation and reporting of results. I gained a tonne of valuable information for my classes this fall.

From day three to day six we excavated a mock forensic scene. Most people probably think that forensic archaeology is all about ‘digging up stuff’, but there is much more involved. We had to employ our knowledge of crime scene investigation. Nothing gets touched until we have photographed and documented everything. Next we had to complete a preliminary survey — establishing the parameters and boundaries of the crime scene, aiding in the evaluation of the search techniques (grid search or zone search, walk through versus on hands and knees search), taking notes at the scene (weather, lighting, date, time), and the crime scene sketch (what is present and where?).

Once these steps were completed, which took an entire day (not 15 minutes like on CSI!), we began to map our burial. This exercise was very informative because I learned new ways to teach students how to map an archaeological site, which can sometimes be very frustrating as many students are adverse to any course that requires math skills, e.g. horizontal and vertical baselines, proper use of a compass, triangulation, plotting on graph paper. After mapping every small detail, we were ready to ‘dig’. We excavated for three days and by Saturday morning we were ready to remove the bones from the grave...of course, only after mapping them in situ!

Another goal of this summer program was to introduce participants to the newest technology available to archaeologists. Not only was this and other aspects of the course of incredible academic value, but I met some of the most amazing people: a forensic anthropologist from Georgia State, a police officer from York, Ontario, and three women who belonged to a human rights group in Chile (we became close friends and I hope to travel to Chile in the near future to participate in their work). One evening we even had a ‘show and tell’ about the forensic cases we had worked on. It was incredible to hear first-hand accounts of atrocities in the Balkans, Chile, the United States, and even York, Ontario.

If you want to know what it is like to be a REAL forensic archaeologist (and not the kind we see on those popular television programs) check out Mercyhurst Archaeological Institute. <http://mai.mercyhurst.edu> It is truly an amazing experience! ■

I would like to thank the Quality of Teaching Committee for a Travel/Small Project Grant which helped me cover some of the expenses with travelling to and participating in this wonderful field school.

I gained a tonne of valuable information for my classes this fall.

The CAT's New Lair

Renovations to McNally Main's second floor over the summer included a move across the hall for the Centre for Academic Technologies. Now in MM202 (next door to the Office of Instructional Development), the CAT boasts new furniture with increased working space and upgraded computers. Our Technology Teaching Assistants, Zoë, Vagarro and Subin, continue to provide their expertise to assist faculty and faculty support staff in the development or enhancement of technology skills. Sample projects include:

- Student orientations for WebCT log-in for many classes at the beginning of term;
- Assistance for faculty members with their classroom supported WebCT courses;
- One-on-one or small group instruction in applications such as Access, Excel, FrontPage, PowerPoint or WebCT;



- Digitization and editing of audio and video clips for uploading to web sites;
- Conversion and editing text and image files to PDF.

Both a digital video and a digital stills camera are available for use by faculty on a sign-out basis. We continue to offer the in-lab use of our multi purpose scanner and specialized multi-media software.

Although drop-in assistance is available, an appointment will ensure a more timely response to your request for assistance. Call 496-8168, or email cat@smu.ca ■

Instructional Development Grants Program

Each year the Quality of Teaching Committee awards a number of Travel and Small Project Grants (to a maximum of \$700 each) and one Major Project Grant (to a maximum of \$2,500).

The IDG program was established to support projects that improve upon or develop new and creative approaches to teaching and learning practices.

Travel/Small project grants were awarded last year to:

- Tanya Peckman, Anthropology (see page 4)
- Heather Sanderson, Library (see page 6)
- Ping Lu, Modern Languages and Classics

- Hermann Schwind, Management
- Nadine LeGier, English
- John Reid, History
- Gerry Cameron, International Development Students
- Pawan Lingras, Math and CSC and Pierre Jutras, Geology

Proposals for small project grants may be made at any time during the calendar year. The application deadline for the Major Project Grant is February 15th each year.

For more information on eligibility, criteria, application procedures or application forms, http://www.smu.ca/administration/oid/i_d_grants.htm ■

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ones empowered to summarize statistically their specific SEEQ data, Benbow showed how she and her colleagues have used different ways (e.g., average, median, etc.) to aggregate and present their data (e.g., tables, graphs, etc.). This means that every year faculty members, post-modernists and statisticians alike, are engaged in a process of analyzing – and specifically focusing on – their teaching. They do not simply ‘receive’ the numbers; they actually work with the numbers. This is active learning about teaching!

Context is Crucial

At Saint Mary's, the need for some sort of summative evaluation, as provided by the current instrument, will likely preclude the adoption of the Manitoba model. However, the fundamental strength of the SEEQ instrument is that it is flexible. While Saint Mary's can continue to aggregate the data collected from the SEEQ, individual faculty can use it to engage in the continuous process of self-reflection and self-improvement.

Another useful function of the SEEQ is that factors and questions may be added to the standard form, and a database of questions already exists. For example, an individual faculty member or an entire department might wish to include questions that require some self-reflection on the part of the students in terms of their level of diligence, attendance, effort and not simply their ‘interest in the course’.

As Benbow noted several times, the SEEQ instrument, like any student evaluation of teaching instrument, including our current one, is but one source of information on our teaching. What makes the SEEQ stand out is that it not only provides valid information on our strengths, it also helps us focus on areas of improvement so that we become better teachers, while simultaneously creating an atmosphere that encourages, indeed prioritizes, better teaching.

Is Saint Mary's ready for the WMD option? ■

Engaging Graduate Students and Faculty in Library Instruction

Heather Sanderson, Patrick Power Library

Last spring, I attended the WILU conference in Victoria, B.C. WILU (Workshop on Instruction in Library Use) brings together instruction librarians from across Canada and the United States to listen, talk, and learn from each other the successful methods being used for library instruction at different institutions. A range of methodologies was showcased. It was illuminating to hear how others are doing what I am always trying to learn to do better and also to see that there is no one, perfect method of teaching users to improve their library research. One of the most valuable ideas I took from the conference was the reminder that different groups can benefit from particular approaches. This point was made in a session that focused on serving the needs of graduate students. I have taught graduate students in the past, and am aware of their differing needs from undergraduates, but what was most welcome in this session was the practical approach, especially the emphasis on techniques.

Graduate students are different than undergraduates. For one thing, they have a degree, which indicates prior success in navigating the learning experience. And, although undergraduates are an increasingly diverse group, this is even truer for graduate students. Graduates are often older and frequently have family responsibilities and significant job commitments outside their studies. While many continue directly into graduate school after their first degree, others may have been away from formal education for several years. Such students may be out of practice and overwhelmed by the prospect of doing research while navigating unfamiliar sources, formats, and platforms. Moreover, they may be pursuing graduate studies in a different discipline and encountering difficulties due to their prior training and experience.

Other considerations when preparing to give library instruction to graduate

students include the barriers that can be caused by assumptions about their level of expertise. Although highly motivated, the student may not be aware of gaps in his or her knowledge of the specialized sources and organization of information in the discipline. Or, the student may be aware, but is also aware that graduate students are expected to be independent learners and may thus be reluctant to ask for help. Faculty may assume that graduate students are more effective researchers than they, in fact, are, or assume that students should be capable of gaining the necessary skills on their own. At times, faculty may unintentionally cause bewilderment by referring the student to sources that are unfamiliar, too numerous, highly specialized, or difficult to locate. Librarians can also make assumptions about graduate students' abilities, perhaps influenced by the experience of working on the reference desk and helping those who are least experienced and independent.

The session provided numerous strategies for engaging faculty and graduate students in library instruction. The first step is to gain faculty support. Librarians must educate faculty about what the library can provide for graduate students and build support for giving class time to librarians for instruction. Developing collaborative working relationships benefits librarian, faculty and graduate student: librarians gain a more detailed sense of the teaching and research interests of the departments, its faculty and students, while faculty become more aware of all the resources the library has to offer researchers in their field.



Heather Sanderson

Graduate students need to be engaged in the library instruction for it to be most meaningful. Techniques that may work well in undergraduate classes can result in graduate students politely humoring the earnest librarian. Furthermore, assumptions about their own level of expertise in the library may prevent students from fully engaging in the instruc-

tion. Thus, articulating the strategies being taught as a way to build on what the students already know is a key technique. Acquiring research skills is a process; the instruction may be more effective if that process is modeled within the session.

Graduate students are typically expected to participate in their own learning, working independently and leading seminar discussions. A brief assignment prior to the class, such as an article discussing disciplinary research problems or techniques could be used to initiate discussion and establish a context for the session. Tying the instruction to a particular stage of the research process may help to avoid the all-you-can-eat-buffet approach, which is always a temptation for the librarian who knows he or she will only be in front of this group of students once. For example, discussing research strategies in the context of the literature review process may be more concrete for students for whom the thesis is a looming, nebulous project. As well, the differences between the research needs of graduates and undergraduates should be made explicit to this group, as many often are teaching assistants. The advanced techniques they need for their own research may be counterproductive

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New Faculty Orientation

On September 1, 2004, the Office of Instructional Development and the Quality of Teaching Committee hosted 25 new faculty on New Faculty Orientation day. The full day of sessions and activities was designed to introduce faculty to many of their colleagues and to the physical space on campus.

Following a welcome by Dr. Terry Murphy, Vice-President, Academic and

Research, presentations included a 'survivors panel' of last year's new faculty; a 'partners in teaching' panel; technology support at Saint Mary's (in the classroom, in the labs, on the desktop, to SATURN and Degree Navigator, etc.); support services through the Office of Instructional Development, and a guided tour of the many buildings and offices on campus. The busy day ended with a reception and words of welcome by Dr. Colin Dodds, President of Saint Mary's University.



"Partners in Teaching" Panel at New Faculty Orientation. From the left: Bridget Brownlow, Sexual Harassment Officer; Cindy Harrigan, Patrick Power Library; Madeleine Lelievre and Kris Seibert, Atlantic Centre for Students with Disabilities; Keith Hotchkiss, Director, Student Services; Jill Murphy and Heather Thompson, Writing Centre

New Faculty Network

New faculty will continue to meet once a month over lunch to participate in fellowship and dialogue. Topics are selected and scheduled to reflect the 'rhythms of the semester', especially in the Fall semester. Resource people include members of the Quality of Teaching Committee and other interested faculty. Topics and dates for 2004/05 are:

September 24	Getting Mid-Semester Feedback From Students
October 22	Exams and Grading – Policies and Practices
November 19	Student Evaluation of Teaching
January 21	The Teaching Dossier
March 11	Technology in Teaching (WebCT and More)
April 29	Closing Session - TBA

Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE) Annual Conference

University of Prince Edward Island, June 8 – 11, 2005
Theme: A Fine Balance: The Student Experience of Learning

The STLHE annual conference provides a relaxing yet stimulating forum for discussing issues in higher education with a wide cross-section of colleagues — faculty, instructional developers and graduate students from across Canada and internationally. The conference includes keynote sessions, small discussion sessions, workshops, panels, demonstrations, and other participative presentations.

For information on STLHE and the annual conferences, visit <http://www.mcmaster.ca/stlhe/events/annual.conference.htm>

Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC)

4th Annual Conference

Student-Centred Assessment: Strategies for Improving Learning and Student Outcomes

Westin Nova Scotian Halifax, Nova Scotia, November 25 – 26, 2004

Keynote speakers include:

Dr. Donna Englemann, Alverno College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Dr. Donald Woods, McMaster University
Dr. Julia Christensen-Hughes, University of Guelph

For program and registration information, visit: www.mphec.ca

Engaging...continued from page 6

for their students, who need to be taught skills appropriate for the assignments they are asked to complete. Finally, providing an opportunity to expand the instruction beyond the class is critical, by inviting students to email further questions, make individual appointments, and come to the reference desk.

With the development in graduate programs at Saint Mary's, sessions such as the one outlined above have been valuable to me as I develop my teaching skills. In my experience, conferences are usually stimulating and informative, largely because they bring colleagues together and provide an intimate forum for the exchange of ideas. WILU was an exemplary conference, one I hope to participate in again next year.

I would like to thank the Quality of Teaching Committee for a Travel/Small Project Grant which helped me cover some of the expenses with travelling to and participating in this conference. ■

2004 AAU **Distinguished Teacher Award**

Dr. Janet Hill, Department of English, Saint Mary's University



Janet Hill being presented with the AAU Distinguished Teacher Award by Dr. Shelagh Brown, President, Mount Saint Vincent University at the AAU President's Council meeting, U. de Moncton, September 24, 2004.

The Association of Atlantic University (AAU) Awards were instituted in 1991 to recognize excellence in teaching and instructional leadership in the region.

Members of the AAU Coordinating Committee on Faculty Development, representing AAU member institutions from Atlantic Canada and the West Indies, meet in June each year to select the winner(s) of the Teaching Award and the Instructional Leadership Award. Nominees are recipients of similar awards at their home institutions.

Saint Mary's nominee each year is the most recent winner of the Father William Stewart, S.J., Medal in Teaching. The nominee for the 2005 AAU Award will be Prof. Porter Scobey, Department of Mathematics and Computing Science.

Since their inception in 1991, two other Saint Mary's faculty have won this award: Dr. David Cone, Department of Biology, 1999; and, Dr. Terry Wagar, Department of Management, 2000.

For nomination guidelines, a complete list of winners, and the Award winners' speeches to the President's Council for the past three years, go to <http://www.atlanticuniversities.ca> and follow the Faculty Development Committee link. ■



If you enjoyed the article, "A Fair and Reasonable Approach to Deadlines and Late Penalties" (see insert) from the latest edition of *The Teaching Professor*, then you can enjoy past, current and future issues – online and free of charge – compliments of the Quality of Teaching Committee.

The move last year from a print subscription to an online version was made for reasons of economy and accessibility. An electronic subscription costs less and gives easy access to all Saint Mary's faculty and staff.

There's just one catch – you have to register to receive your monthly electronic subscription. However, it's easy and convenient to do. Email Mary, Office of Instructional Development at oid@smu.ca, or call 5088 for further information.

You will find the articles in each issue of *The Teaching Professor* to be thought-provoking, timely, and helpful because they are written by and for teaching professors.