FROM THE DIRECTOR’S DESK

Welcome, spring! We are pleased to present our second semester newsletter, designed to update you on events and other changes in the Coulter Faculty Center. We have been busy. Last year we logged a total of 951 individual services to faculty. As of February 8 this year, we have surpassed that number at 1,350 individual services.

As we face our budget cut along with the rest of the campus, we examined our Faculty Appreciation Banquet, and with the consent of our advisory board, we decided to make this a heavy hors d’oeuvres and wine event. The program will remain the same, with remarks from the chancellor and the provost and awards. We will again offer the entertainment of the WCU Not-Ready for Prime Time Players, starring the chancellor, the provost and some surprise performers this year. The WCU Jazz Ensemble, under the direction of Pavel Wlosok, will provide musical entertainment. The event is limited to 200 guests so register soon at www.wcu.edu/13127.asp.

In the area of digital media, we are pleased to welcome Jason Melvin to the Faculty Sandbox. Most recently employed as a technology consultant in the Institute for the Economy and the Future, Jason joins Neil Torda in providing digital media and other support services in the Faculty Sandbox. See the article on the realignment of these services, “What’s New in Digital Media?”

Robert Crow and Amy Martin, instructional developers in the CFC, have finished Dee Fink’s intensive course design training and are working with faculty who are redesigning their courses to implement the QEP. Be certain to review the article on Large Course Redesign, which describes the pilot as well as the services we provide that are especially timely with class sizes going up.

We hope you will also join us for the Summer Institute for Teaching and Learning, May 12-14. The focus this year is experiential learning.

Best wishes for a smooth semester ending, and let us know how we can help you.

Anna T. McFadden
Director and professor

Research Software Support Finds a Home at the CFC

By Sue Grider

The Coulter Faculty Center is pleased to now support Research Software Services for our faculty at Western. These services will include the installation and basic use of the quantitative statistics packages SAS and SPSS, and the qualitative software package ATLAS.ti. Sue Grider will be able install the software on a WCU computer and will be available to answer your questions about how to use these software packages but will not be able to tell you what specific analysis to run. If you have issues running SAS and SPSS in the classroom, please contact the Help Desk as Client Services will still handle lab and classroom issues. Our Faculty Fellows for Research Design can answer more in-depth design questions.

Part of the Research Software Services is the support of our online survey tool. As many of you may have heard, retiring Ultimate Survey is in process but is pending budget decisions. After a new survey tool is purchased, there will be a period of time for the previous users of Ultimate Survey to download their data from the server as well as to print a hard copy of their surveys. During this period of time we will not be creating any new accounts on Ultimate Survey but hope to create new accounts in a new online survey tool. Please look for these dates in future e-mail messages.

To obtain access to any of this software or to get assistance in the use of this software, please call the IT Help Desk at extension 7487 and request either installation and/or training on any of the packages noted above. Please feel free to contact Sue Grider directly at extension 2279 or e-mail her at sgrider@email.wcu.edu for any questions concerning the installation and use of the research software.

As more information becomes available, we will be sure to keep you updated.
As summer approaches, the WebCat team is coordinating with UNCC and UNCW and preparing for a proposed upgrade to Blackboard Learning System – Vista Release 8.0. This new version focuses on stability and bug fixes but includes some significant steps toward the next generation product Blackboard 9. Blackboard 9 (not yet released) will include tools, design and architecture that have been deemed as best in class from two previously competing products (Blackboard Classic and Blackboard Vista).

In the area of bug fixes, of particular note to users of Grading Forms is the functioning as intended usage within Assignments. In our current WebCat environment, when using a Grading Form for an Assignment, students can’t preview the Grading Form that will be applied to the assignment prior to the Assignment being graded.

**NEW FEATURES IN VISTA RELEASE 8.0**

**Blackboard Learning Environment Connector**

The Blackboard Learning Environment Connector allows Vista/CE Institutions to be integrated to the Blackboard Academic Suite. Thus, all Learning Management System activity for an integrated institution can be carried out through from the Blackboard Community System. Integrated users from a Vista institution can log in to the Blackboard Academic Suite and directly access Vista or CE features without re-authenticating. This is an important feature in moving forward with a future upgrade to the next generation product Blackboard 9.

**Blackboard Scholar**

Blackboard Scholar is a social bookmarking service customized for education. Social bookmarking is an activity performed over a computer network that allows users to save and categorize a personal collection of bookmarks -- stored or retrievable web pages -- and share them with others. It provides a new way for students and instructors to find educational resources on the web for courses and research. Furthermore, by storing and sharing associated information with each resource through tags and disciplines, Scholar allows users to evaluate the resources and find the most relevant and reliable. Rather than saving -- or “bookmarking” -- favorite Web sites in a browser or course, they can be stored and easily accessed from any Internet-enabled computer by using Scholar. Blackboard Scholar is integrated, providing access within the course environment.

**SafeAssign**

Plagiarism has always been challenging for educators. With the wealth of resources available on the Internet, plagiarism is often difficult and time-consuming to detect. And without knowing proper citation rules, students may be plagiarizing without even being aware. SafeAssign is a plagiarism prevention service that not only helps students learn crucial citation and plagiarism rules but it also helps teachers ensure originality without a time-consuming investigation.

Release 8 features SafeAssign, a tool that compares submitted assignments against a set of academic essays to identify areas of overlap. SafeAssign can be used to prevent plagiarism and to create opportunities to help students identify how to properly attribute sources rather than paraphrase. SafeAssign draws from several different databases: the Internet, ProQuest, ABI/Inform database, institutional document archives, and the Global Reference Database, which includes content submitted into SafeAssign from Blackboard-powered institutions.
Did you know that you can have Wikis set up for each of your classes? Or that you can use iTunes U to deliver audio, video, and even PDF's to your students automatically? What about allowing your students to keep online journals using blogging software like Wordpress or TeamServices? Are you familiar with all of the ways you can deliver video to your students? How about the fact you can create an immersive 3-D world for simulation using Catamount Island in the virtual world of Second Life?

You didn’t know about this stuff? Then you should be spending more time in the Sandbox at the Coulter Faculty Center. The Sandbox is your hub for all things digital. You will receive quick and friendly help from our digital media support staff including our new Sandbox caretaker, Jason Melvin, our student worker Wanda Summerow, and Neil Torda, the digital media lecturer. If you have any questions or need assistance with any educational technology, the Sandbox should be your first place to look for an answer. Jason, Wanda or Neil will be more than happy to assist you in any way possible. Even if you have a question about WebCAT, Instructional Design, or analytical software, the Sandbox should be your first point of contact, the Staff will make sure you are put in touch with the correct resources to answer your questions.

In the last several months, we have revamped the Sandbox with new software including iLife 09 and Adobe CS4. We still have machines with legacy versions as well, just in case you need to make a change to an existing project. Other services available include: scanning of images and text; audio and video capturing, editing and delivery; Web page design and hosting; screencast creation; podcast creation and delivery; support for Second Life and research and statistical analysis tools.

WELCOME NEW STAFF

Jason Melvin, formerly with the WCU Institute for the Economy and the Future, has joined the CFC staff. Jason manages the Faculty Sandbox.

Annette Parris, formerly with the Department of Chemistry and Physics, has joined the Coulter Faculty Center as office manager.

ITUNES U AND PODCASTING

Have you logged into iTunes U lately? If so, then you have noticed our new design. If not, head on over to http://itunes.wcu.edu and login and see what is available. Since September of 2008, we have had more than 23,000 tracks downloaded from our iTunes U site. If you are interested in using this free, robust system, please contact the Sandbox at 227-3023. And speaking of podcasting, check out the new digital comments podcast, http://digitalcommentspodcast.com, where we discuss current trends and technology available for use in higher education.

WIKIS AND BLOGS

Last spring, the Coulter Faculty Center began to support a new wiki server. Since then we have had 127 wikis created for classes and group collaboration. If you would like a wiki for one of your projects, contact the Sandbox for help getting one set up. In addition to the Wiki server, we also have two different blog servers with more than 150 active bloggers.

Remember, no matter what your question regarding digital media or educational technology, the Coulter Faculty Center's Sandbox is here to help.
Connections

With course section enrollments increasing across campus, professors may find themselves wondering how to teach a greater number of students without sacrificing course quality. Sections of four large enrollment courses at WCU were redesigned and piloted during the spring 2008 semester as part of a UNC-Teaching and Learning with Technology Collaborative initiative. These courses were Health 123-Health and Wellness (Bill Papin), CMHC 201-Introduction to Speech Communication (Will Dulaney), HSCC 101-Nutrition, Fitness, and Wellness (Michele Scifers), and CMTA 104-The Theater Experience (Claire Eye and Peter Savage).

Some of the different ideas explored in the redesigns were putting narrated PowerPoint lectures online (via WebCat) to be viewed outside of class time so that students may spend class time working on interactive activities and discussions based on the lectures (HSCC 101); putting quizzes online that students may take multiple times until they master the material so that class time could be spent applying the reading material rather than having to devote class time to taking the quiz (Health 123); streamlining syllabi and course activities so that instructors may have a “bank” of activities that meet course objectives agreed upon by all teaching different sections of the course (CMHC 201); and using video and podcasts as a means to deliver course content, freeing up class time or, potentially, freeing up classroom space as students would receive some content online and some face-to-face, rather than needing to be in the classroom three hours a week (CMTA 104). The CMTA 104 course also employed a “buffet” redesign model in which students could choose from a variety of activities to satisfy some course requirements.

The Health 123 and CMTA 104 redesigns produced the greatest gains in student satisfaction and student performance. The Health 123 redesign increased the course grade average from 66 percent to 74 percent when comparing two sections with almost equal enrollment, and students in this course commented that the online quizzes greatly improved their learning. The CMTA 104 redesign, in contrast, allowed the Department of Stage and Screen to increase enrollment in the pilot section of CMTA 104 without decreasing student performance or student learning experience. Despite a 47 percent increase in the number of students from the pre-pilot to the pilot semester, the number of A/A- grades increased by 80 percent, while the number of F grades only increased by 3 percent (there was no appreciable difference in the number of B, C, D or withdrawal grades). While some students did express concern about the size of the class, they did note that the interactivity of the course and the online options greatly contributed to their learning. Both the instructors from the pilot sections of Health 123 and CMTA 104 remain committed to the large course redesign philosophy and are still working closely with the Coulter Faculty Center to refine their redesigns.

For more information about Large Course Redesign, go to the UNC-TLT Web site at www.unctl.org/initiatives/lecr/index.htm, or contact the Coulter Faculty Center at extension 7196.
JOIN US for the Annual FACULTY APPRECIATION EVENT

Tuesday, April 21 | UC Grand Room

The Wine Social begins at 6 pm with heavy hors d’oeuvres. Musical entertainment by the WCU Jazz Ensemble.

Join the chancellor, provost, and other members of the WCU Not-Ready for Prime Time Players.

Please register at www.wcu.edu/13127.asp

Kyle “Handyman” Carter will make a return appearance!

Bring a guest!
YOU’VE HEARD THE TERM ‘EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION’, BUT DO YOU WONDER WHAT IT IS?

The Coulter Faculty Center invites all members of the faculty, including part-time members and those on a term appointment as well as staff with teaching responsibilities, to experience experiential education at WCU’s annual Summer Institute for Teaching and Learning, to be held at the Hinds University Center from May 12 to 14.

Our guest facilitator for this year’s Summer Institute will be Dr. Kelly Ward, associate professor of higher education at Washington State University. Kelly teaches in the areas of college teaching, student development, student affairs, research methods, and administration of higher education. Her research addresses questions related to faculty development; the integration of research, teaching, and service for faculty; work and family concerns for faculty; and faculty involvement in service learning and other aspects of community engagement. In addition to her faculty position at Washington State University, Kelly has held a faculty position at Oklahoma State University and faculty and administrative positions at the University of Montana. At Montana, Kelly worked with the University of Montana and the Montana Campus Compact to develop an infrastructure for different aspects of community service with an emphasis on faculty involvement in service learning. Kelly is the author of the book “Faculty Service Roles and the Scholarship of Engagement,” published by Jossey Bass.

In addition to working with Kelly Ward, registrants will be able to join one of the following Focus Teams about a specific topic and acquire knowledge that they can apply to their course(s). These focus teams are led by experienced faculty.

Reflective Writing – Marsha Lee Baker, Department of English

E-Experiential Learning – Carlie Merritt, Department of Applied Criminology

International Experiences and Perspectives – Chris Blake, Department of English

SOTL – John Habel, Senior Faculty Fellow for SOTL/Department of Psychology

Experiential Education and First-Year Seminars – Winfred Gordon, Department of Psychology Experiencing Service Learning; Lydia Aydlett, Department of Psychology

Experiencing Undergraduate Research – Scott Philyaw, Mountain Heritage Center/Department of History

Registration is open. For more information about the Summer Institute, including information on how to register, please go to www.wcu.edu/12175.asp or contact the Coulter Faculty Center at extension 7196.

Dr. Kelly Ward, associate professor of higher education at Washington State University, will be the featured facilitator at the Summer Institute for Teaching and Learning, May 12-14.
A recent research study conducted by Western’s Committee on Student Learning (see Connections, 2008, p. #3) showed that WCU students seek and enjoy active learning over traditional lecture-based teaching. Berg’s (1998) research also reveals that reorganizing and adapting ways of presenting material to students can create an environment in which knowledge retention is significantly increased. Both of these findings are in accordance with Edgar’s (1969) perennial study concluding that while students remember only 10 to 20 percent of what they read and hear, they remember 70 to 90 percent of information when actively involved in their own learning.

So how can we incorporate these suggestions into our instruction? Pedagogical expert and SACS reviewer D. Fink (2003) suggests that adapting instruction to include his Active Learning Model enhances student engagement in the learning process by tapping into two realms: experience and dialogue. The experience component in this model addresses both real-world experiences (doing) and vicarious experiences (observing). If class time does not allow for students’ direct observations in the field, traditional classroom instructors can create vicarious experiences by integrating elements such as demonstrations, guest speakers, observations of processes, simulations, and video into the class period.

The dialogue component of Fink’s model incorporates either a dialogue with self or a dialogue with others. Dialogue with self may be elicited through journaling, portfolio, blogs and wikis, and allows learners to think reflectively about a topic. Dialogue with others is prompted when students have conversations with each other, with experts in specific subject areas, or with practitioners in the field about a topic or experience. Fink’s model is most powerful when the instructor creates a dialectic between the two components of experience and dialogue.

Fink suggests that capitalizing on the power of this interaction involves a sequence where students first engage in dialogue to promote deeper and richer understanding about a topic, followed by student engagement in an experience – either direct or vicarious. Post-experience processing of information occurs when students engage in dialogue with self (writing) or with others (discussion). To learn more about incorporating active learning strategies into your instruction, contact Robert Crow at 227-2761 or rcrow@wcu.edu.


THE COULTER FACULTY CENTER STAFF