



Faculty Forum

From the Faculty Center for Teaching Excellence

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The number and quality of responses to Bruce Henderson's "The Tyranny of the Textbook" was immensely gratifying. We received 10 responses, all with substance and many filling a page or more. In addition, a number of people have commented informally. Of the respondents, five agreed with Dr. Henderson's position wholeheartedly, two disagreed--one "vehemently"--and three were mixed. (All opinions that we print belong solely to the authors, and our printing of an opinion entails neither approval nor disapproval of its content or style.)

Excerpts from Faculty Responses

I liked it.

I couldn't have said it better myself.

However, my text in general ed., Geography 103, is "conceptually structured," and the students still gripe and read it as little as they can get away with. **Ralph Triplette, Geosciences**

I am angry and insulted!

I have written textbooks;

I am writing one;

I have and am teaching without one;

And I disagree with Bruce vehemently!

I would like to write a rebuttal to share a different perspective.

Jim Carland, Accounting

If faculty read the textbook in lieu of creative lecture, students are worse than bored: they are disgusted. If faculty synopsise main points from the textbook in lecture, students tend to review their lecture notes when preparing for exams and never open the book at all. I believe that both faculty and students need to regard most textbooks as information resources, "cookbooks," if you will, that provide a foundation for creative thinking and discussion in the classroom and beyond.

Sharon Jacques, Nursing

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Without an assigned textbook, most students are immediately uncomfortable with what they perceive as a lack of structure, and only the best students ever adapt positively.

Walt Foegelle, Health Services Management

*Thanks to
Ann Jacobs,
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Dan Pittillo, &
an anonymous
administrator
for additional
comments.*

In advanced courses it may be different, but in the general education courses too many students regard the courses as irrelevant and as something that should be gotten through in the easiest way possible.

There is considerable cutting of classes.

The textbook is useful
to those students
to study for
exams.

In general,
I find the longer
I teach a course the further
away I get from following the textbook
and to many students that is very upsetting.
Arden Horstman, Geoscience and Anthropology

While working on my BA in English at UNC-CH years ago, I took an Introduction to Folklore class and was surprised when I learned that the majority of our assignments were from library reserve readings. We rarely used our textbook. As a typically lazy and irresponsible undergraduate, I initially resented having to do so much "legwork" in the library. Gradually, however, I

grew to feel responsible for my work. Somehow I realized that there is more to school than textbooks, that if I wanted to do well in the class I could get off my duff and do the work assigned to me. In retrospect, it seems almost like a rite of passage, like discovering the difference between a magazine and a scholarly journal. I learned more in that course than in any other I've ever taken.

John Creech, Library