

THE TEACHING EXCHANGE

BROWN UNIVERSITY ■ VOLUME 13 / NUMBER 1 ■ SEPTEMBER 2007



The Harriet W. Sheridan Center serves the faculty and graduate students of Brown University as its locus for ongoing collegial professional development. The Teaching Exchange is one of the Center's media for exchanging ideas about teaching within the Brown community. The September 2007 issue brings together contributions by faculty and staff on common pedagogical challenges: how departmental faculty can foster the professional development of their graduate students, what students can tell us about how our teaching fosters

their learning and how the example of colleagues from both Brown and RISD who have won awards can inspire the University community. This issue celebrates the dedication of the Center's home at 96 Waterman Street as The Frederick Lippitt and Mary Ann Lippitt House, as well as introducing the Center's newest member of staff. The Teaching Exchange is simultaneously published on our web site. All hyperlinks may be easily accessed by going to the on-line version at www.brown.edu/sheridan_center/publications.

On Teaching Graduate Students How to Be Independent Lifelong Learners

ASSOCIATE PROF. KATE LYNN LAPANE
Bio-Med Community Health

Recently, I participated in a national panel discussion on developing competencies for the various levels of training (master's, doctorate, post-doctoral) for health services research. Given the multi-disciplinary nature of this field, the graduate program directors acknowledged that the list of desired competencies for doctoral students could morph into a list so vast that it would not be achievable within the time limitations of most doctoral programs. I noted that one of my goals for students is to teach them how to be independent, lifelong learners. I rationalized that if we achieved this goal our graduates would have the skills to continually expand their methodological sophistication as new challenges in their research programs appeared. There was much agreement with this concept around the table that day, but during informal meetings after the panel session, it became clear that more sharing about what it means to nurture lifelong learners is warranted. Further conversations regarding various approaches to mentoring students to embrace this philosophy and providing experience and skills to practice this approach are in order.

What is an independent lifelong learner? I believe a lifelong learner is a person who has the passion and courage to consider options beyond their personal "toolbox" filled with knowledge, techniques, and methods they've mastered in their education programs, as well as work and life experiences. A lifelong learner is also someone who not only has the desire to continuously broaden their scope, as well as deepen their understanding of knowledge. Having the passion to learn without direction or guidance can often leave a student spinning in circles. Thus, independent lifelong learners must also have the skills to take their passion to learn one step further and bravely march down a new path of inquiry and discovery,

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The Lippitt House Dedication

At a ceremony held on April 20, 2007, # 96 Waterman St., home of the Sheridan Center was named in recognition of the extraordinary commitment and noteworthy philanthropy to Brown University of siblings Frederick Lippitt and Mary Ann Lippitt. Vice-Chancellor Marie J. Langlois '64 accepted the dedication of the building to the Lippitts on behalf of the Corporation. President Ruth J. Simmons spoke warmly of the many important contributions of both Frederick and Mary Ann Lippitt to the Rhode Island community, whether in the areas of education, social service or professional achievement. Timothy T. More, Esq., P'96, responded to this great honor on behalf of the Lippitt's extensive family with some

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and to do so confidently.

How then do we as graduate trainers provide such training? Within my department, faculty implement different strategies to achieve this goal including serving as role models. I attempt to implement the following formal opportunities which include 1) fostering a community of learning; 2) providing opportunities for teaching as a vehicle for providing graduate students perspective on their learning style and others; and 3) teaching students how to ask good questions. I've summarized strategies and thoughts for each area below.

Community of learning

I believe that we do not learn optimally in a vacuum. As such, I strive to foster a sense of community among students. Ideally, a community of learning would acknowledge that all members of the community (faculty, students, and research collaborators) are at different phases of their understanding of concepts within a discipline. Setting a tone for a community of learning begins with creating a non-threatening learning atmosphere. I begin this process by enforcing the notion that one learns more when they acknowledge (out loud) what they do not understand. Students must feel completely comfortable stopping me at any point throughout the lecture to ask questions. With this approach, there is a shift in the classroom from one directional pouring of information onto students to a learning conversation. Shifting to a bi-directional approach in the classroom, I assume shared responsibility with students for our mutual learning. The realization that saying "Great question! I don't know – but I will find out." contributes to the process of learning is liberating for professors at any level in their career.

It is common to have upper level graduate students sit in on parts of my classes again. Why? Not because it is mandated or I haven't done my job well, but rather students have learned to self-regulate, iden-

tify areas for more growth, and appropriate venues to attain deeper understanding. I'm thrilled when this occurs for several reasons. First, the advanced graduate students are fabulous models of lifelong learning behavior for the first and second year students. The advanced students have transitioned to the point where they are reflective practitioners who have learned to self-assess their attainment of competencies and have sought out opportunities for understanding knowledge at a deeper level. By participating in this way, the newer students in the program quickly realize that it is the norm to continuously learn and think about the concepts presented in class and that it is not my expectation that they will achieve complete understanding during the first exposure to the concepts. Second, the sophistication of the advanced student's questions is exciting. It becomes rapidly clear to all in the room that with each concept there are different depths of understanding. Questions regarding the subtleties of the approach often clarify confusion for the students newly introduced to the concepts. Third, the advanced students through their active participation in the learning conversations often become recognized as another source for the first/second year students to continue the dialogue. Students often share space, socialize, and simply see each other more often than I see them. Expanding the circle of folks with whom these discussions occur contributes to building a community of learners. If we train students to view every interaction with people as a potential moment for teaching and learning, we further set the stage for lifelong learning.

Appreciate that competition among students threatens everyone's learning. If a competitive environment in a doctoral program is permitted, the concept of fostering a community of learning cannot be fully realized. Competition breeds insecurity. If students are insecure, they hide what they don't know rather than be

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anecdotes which exemplified their commitment to the well-being of all who knew them. President Simmons unveiled the plaque which is hung in the entrance to The Frederick Lippitt and Mary Ann Lippitt House and the assembled gathering gave a toast to the Lippitts. Amongst those present were incoming Chancellor Thomas J. Tisch '76; incoming Vice-Chancellor Jerome C. Vascellaro '74; Senator Lincoln Chafee '75; Henry D. Sharpe '45 LLD'70 hon., P'77, P'78, PMAT'86; RI State Senator Lila Sapsinsley and Alumni Corporation member Hannelore Rodriguez-Farrar '87 MA '90.

The Lippitts were scions of a family who served the citizens of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations for generations in a wide variety of positions. They were the children of United States Senator Henry F. Lippitt and Lucy Hayes Herron Lippitt, sister in law of President William Howard Taft. They were the grandchildren of Governor Henry Lippitt and the niece and nephew of Governor Charles Warren Lippitt and cousins of the late U.S. Senator John Chafee and Senator Lincoln Chafee '75.

Frederick Lippitt (1916-2005), who was awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws degree in 1977, served the University as a member of the Corporation Board of Fellows and Board of Trustees, Fellow of the John Carter Brown Library, and member of the Advisory Board of the Harriet W. Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning. As a civic leader, politician, educator, philanthropist and army veteran, he devoted his life to public service.

He graduated from St. Mark's School, Yale University '39, and Yale Law School '46. He interrupted his studies at Yale Law School to join the Army during World War II. He served in the Philippines and Italy, and received a bronze star and a purple heart. During the Korean War, he served two years in Germany. He retired as a Lieutenant Colonel and the commanding

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Awards Ceremony 2007



Brown Teaching and Sheridan Award winners. L-R: Mowry, Levy, Spoehr, Vorenberg, Holt, Vazquez, Lapane, Bergeron, Kertzer, Klein, Vohra, Dean Bonde

The 2007 Awards Ceremony, held on May 2nd, brought together for the ninth year Brown and RISD faculty and graduate students to celebrate colleagues who received Awards and Teaching Certificates for their teaching, mentoring and investment in professional development. Co-sponsored by the Dean of the Faculty and the Dean of the Graduate School, and the Harriet W. Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning, the Awards Ceremony was held, to great acclaim, for the first time in Sayles Hall.

The Brown Awards included the Faculty Teaching Excellence Awards, the Sheridan Award for professional development, the Wriston Fellowship, and the Presidential Award for Excellence in Teaching by Graduate Students. RISD Awards included the Provost's Award for Professional Advancement in Teaching, the President's Graduate Student Award for Teaching, and the Graduate Dean's Graduate Student Award for Teaching. In addition, those faculty and graduate students who received Sheridan Center Teaching Certificates as well as those who contributed their time throughout the year to Sheridan Center activities were recognized.

Provost David Kertzer and RISD President Roger Mandle and RISD Provost Jay Coogan were present to acknowledge the

accomplishments of so many members of both academic communities and to celebrate the ninth year of collaboration. Sheridan Center Advisory Board Chair Prof. Karen Fischer, Geological Sciences, opened the event with congratulations and thanks to all who were listed in the extensive programme. Dean of the Faculty Rajiv Vohra presented the Brown Faculty Awards, Dean of the College Katherine Bergeron presented the Wriston Fellowship and Dean of the Graduate School Sheila Bonde presented the Graduate Student Teaching Awards. RISD Dean of Graduate Studies Jessie Shefrin presented the three RISD Awards.

The Awards Ceremony programme recognized an extraordinary number of people who have made a commitment to professional development in their teaching. A record one hundred and seventy-eight (178) Brown and RISD graduate students received their Sheridan Teaching Certificates (levels I, II, III and/or the Certificate in Language Technology). In addition, the programme recognized the many Brown and RISD faculty and graduate students who generously volunteer their time to make the Sheridan Center a truly collegial "center" for professional

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Awards Ceremony

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development on both campuses. These include the Sheridan Center's network of departmental Faculty and Graduate Student Liaisons; the four dedicated Faculty Fellows who serve as mentors to our new and junior faculty, the Center's unique and extraordinary Teaching Consultants, The Royce Family Professors of Teaching Excellence who host seminars at the Center, and all the faculty, staff and graduate students who volunteered to be speakers and discussion leaders for Sheridan Center programs during the past year.

FACULTY TEACHING AWARDS

Dore J. Levy, *Professor of Comparative Literature and East Asian Studies*, The John Rowe Workman Award for Excellence in Teaching in the Humanities

Daniel J. Smith, *Associate Professor of Anthropology*, The William G. McLoughlin Award for Teaching Excellence in the Social Sciences

Michael Vorenberg, *Associate Professor of History*, The William G. McLoughlin Award for Teaching Excellence in the Social Sciences

Kimberly L. Mowry, *Professor of Biology, Bio-Med Molecular Pharmacology, Physiology and Biotechnology*, The Elizabeth Leduc Award for Excellence in Teaching in the Life Sciences

Philip N. Klein, *Professor of Computer Science*, Philip J. Bray Award for Teaching Excellence in the Physical Sciences

2006 HARRIET W. SHERIDAN AWARD FOR DISTINGUISHED CONTRIBUTION TO TEACHING AND LEARNING

Kate Lynn Lapane, *Associate Professor of Bio-Med Community Health*

Kathryn T. Spoehr, *Professor of Cognitive and Linguistic Sciences*

HENRY MERRITT WRISTON FELLOWSHIP

Ravit Reichman, *Assistant Professor of English*

PRESIDENTIAL AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING – BROWN GRADUATE STUDENTS

Maria del Mar Patron Vazquez, *Hispanic Studies*

Kerin Holt, *English*

RISD PROVOST'S FACULTY AWARD FOR PROFESSIONAL ADVANCEMENT IN TEACHING

Professor Nancy Skolos, *Graphic Design*

RISD PRESIDENT'S GRADUATE STUDENT AWARD FOR TEACHING

Victor Serrano, *Interior Architecture*

RISD GRADUATE DEAN'S GRADUATE STUDENT AWARD FOR TEACHING

Ricky Allman, *Painting*



RISD Awards. L-R: Coogan, Ricky Allman, Jessie Shefrin, Mandle



SAVE THE DATE!

Sheridan Center 20th Anniversary Conference For Brown & RISD Faculty, Post Docs and Graduate Students

FRIDAY AND SATURDAY
NOVEMBER 2 & 3, 2007

Friday Keynote Address
Saturday Conference & Luncheon Panel

Graduate Students

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transparent. In the absence of transparency, faculty cannot effectively fulfill their life's mission.

See one, do one, teach one

In our graduate programs, doctoral students are required to complete the Sheridan Level I teaching certificate and to serve as a teaching assistant for one semester. Because courses in their specific discipline are few and departmental needs for students to TA courses with broader public health scope, doctoral students often do not have the ability to practice teaching graduate level material specific to their own research and methodological interests. To address this issue, faculty expands opportunities for this method of learning in courses, as well as journal club.

One level of learning occurs through reading about a technique (or method). A deeper level of understanding occurs when you actually apply the technique or use the method. I encourage students to delve even deeper to attain a new level of understanding of material through the art of teaching. In the context of advanced courses in methodology, I have given as a major assignment (final exam, etc.) an exercise called "see one, do one, teach one". Briefly, I work with students to select a topic tailored to their interests, level of understanding, and cumulative life experiences. The goal in the selection process is to identify a new technique, method, or understanding of a methodological area. To give the students a start in the right direction, I provide each with one or two articles from the literature from which to begin the immersion process. In each case, I identify an area which I know they have studied and applied some of their learning in an application – but there is much more to learn. Students are expected to design a teaching module – objectives, reading assignment (and rationale for selection), handouts and lec-

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Sheridan Center Survey on Support for Professional Development at Brown

In preparation for the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Sheridan Center this year, the Center conducted an online survey of faculty and graduate students at Brown in November 2006, with the goal of ensuring that the Center continues to meet the pedagogical and professional development needs of the Brown teaching community. There were two separate surveys: one of faculty (including regular faculty and postdoctoral fellows), and one of graduate students. A total of ninety-two (92) faculty and one hundred two (102) graduate students responded. While this represents only 14% of the entire faculty and 6% of the overall graduate student population, it is nonetheless possible to draw some useful conclusions from the responses we received.

The survey data indicates that the overwhelming majority of those who reported having used the Center's programs, services, teaching resources and/or publications found them valuable. Survey respondents who had taken advantage of the Center's consulting services were particularly enthusiastic about them. These services include the Individual Teaching Consultation, Presentation/Conference Paper Consultation, Course Consultation, Grant Consultation and Academic Career Consultation. The survey data also revealed that a significant number of faculty and graduate students are not aware of some of the Center's consulting services, teaching resources and publications. We will work harder to publicize these to all members of the Brown teaching community.

We wish to thank all of you who took the time to respond to the survey – the results will help the Center staff to assess its activities and plan strategically to develop new ones. We welcome your suggestions and ideas for Sheridan Center programs, services and resources or contact us at 863-1219 or Sheridan_Center@brown.edu. ❖

Students Know How Your Teaching Helps Them Learn

REBECCA S. MORE, *Director*

Many faculty at Brown are committed to teaching well. But, how do we know if our teaching actually facilitates learning which will empower students to exceed the mere transfer of data? Departmental course evaluations frequently fail to provide faculty and graduate TAs with information about the sort of learning environment which students find most helpful. Inspired by our colleagues at the MIT Teaching and Learning Laboratory and with the assistance of the Office of the Dean of the College, the Sheridan Center asked undergraduates to respond to an e-mail in May asking them “What Kind of Teaching Helps You Learn Best?”

The most important result of the survey was that many Brown undergraduates have a very clear understanding of how they learn best and what faculty and TAs can do to assist them to achieve their educational goals. They know a great deal about their own individual learning style and the kinds of teaching environments and assignments which will challenge them to learn. The responses to the survey fell naturally into thirteen (13) productive learning experiences. We hope that you will find the results below useful and put them to good use in your classrooms and laboratories. You may wish to take advantage of the many “Teaching Tips” on the Sheridan Center website which deal with these different learning experiences: www.brown.edu/sheridan_center/Teaching_Resources/. References to these resources are at the end of each section.

We also hope that faculty and TAs will take the time to reflect upon how your own learning style affects how you teach. With the assistance of Prof. Brian Hayden, Psychology, the Center has created an online “workshop” to help you define your own learning style. Designed by a Brown alumnus with amusing graphics, it

takes about ten (10) minutes to fill in. When you finish, you will have a sense of the impact your learning style may have on your students and some suggestions for altering them to accommodate a broader group of student learners in your courses. Here is the url for the “workshop” – have fun! www.brown.edu/sheridan_center/workshops/cognition_wkshop.html

We hope that you will read the survey results and try the “workshop”. Please send us your ideas and suggestions for how we can be of assistance to you throughout the year. The Center is also deeply grateful to the students who took the time to reply to the survey and hope that they feel that this brief survey will help communicate their concerns and suggestions about what sort of learning environment is most constructive for them.

Survey Results

“I learn best in small classes with a lot of class participation, reading and related short papers. It is important to have high support in the class, so it helps when everyone in the class is supportive. Smaller discussion sessions with organized TAs are very helpful. Bigger classes where professors never learn their students name never have any contact with some students are never helpful or a good learning experience.”

Although the number of responses to the survey was not statistically significant 227/5754, the quality of the responses, such as the quotation above, indicates the seriousness with which many Brown students approach their education. The students themselves identified the following categories as being essential sites for their learning, listed in order of volume of responses: 1) Class Discussions, 2) Independent Work (papers, projects); 3) Effective Faculty Presentation (lectures, labs,

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seminars); 4) Assignments which are connected to course learning goals, 5) Active Learning (hands on experiences, process-based), 6) Faculty Mentoring (recognition of students by faculty), 7) Student Presentations, 8) Class size, 9) Material connected to “real life application” including service learning, 10) Well-organized course with clear goals and objectives, 11) Group Projects, 12) Close Reading of course materials and 13) Assessment forms which promotes learning.

1) Class Discussion

This was the number one area which students cited as an important venue for learning. They understand that the process of discussing assigned topics, whether readings or lab homework, in conjunction with well-informed classmates and under the guidance of a faculty member facilitates substantive learning for them. Sample comments: a) “I learn best when we have guided discussions within the class when the professor specifically points the discussion to a certain question or issue and guarantees that students will not stray off the topic”; b) “Small classes with discussions are the best way to learn. When you have a class of less than 20, everyone can communicate, feel familiar with each other, and therefore understand each other’s trains of thought and learning processes. While lectures are good for taking notes and acquiring information, sections are a necessity to review material and apply it to discussions relevant to the course”; c) “I learn best when professors give thoughtful discussion prompts to small groups of students. In my seminar classes this semester this has been a particularly strong way of starting class. We walk in and there is a question about the reading to discuss with the people next to you during the first few minutes as everyone settles in. A great way to get going and a good segue into larger group discussion (presenting everyone’s findings) or into lecture (giving more background

info)” and d) “when all the students in the class come up with answers (in paper format) for a central question treated in the course and then present their findings to the class - followed by a discussion.”

N.B. Although class discussions may seem easy to manage effectively, in fact they require considerable skill by the leader, whether faculty or TA. Chris Amirault’s excellent Teaching Exchange article from several years ago provides useful suggestions for both experienced and novice discussion leaders: www.brown.edu/sheridan_center/pubs/teachingExchange/jan2003/discussion.shtml

2) Independent Work

Students are well aware of the value of writing, whether in the humanities or the sciences, as a means of learning both data and methodology. The preponderance of students preferred frequent short papers throughout the semester to provide a way of keeping up with the assignments and track their progress. Here are some of the comments: a) “I learn best when I write papers or complete projects/problems sets. It forces me to process what it is being taught and helps synthesize concepts”; b) “I learn best with short response papers because it makes me read the book/material closely”; c) “I love frequent (like every week) short papers that demand constant expression of ideas - so that when it comes time for a longer paper, I have lots of topics and ideas that I have already been getting into, and I have the professors comments on all of those shorter papers, such that the long paper (maybe a research paper) is easier to get into and comes out far more developed than perhaps in a class that asks for only one or two long papers.” Many students also appreciate the chance to do in-depth research and write a substantive paper based on their study: a) “I learn best with long research paper because, unlike with an exam, I go in-depth and don’t forget the information once it is over”; b) “I learn best when researching something I care about, so longer, self-directed research papers are best.”

N.B. Regardless of which length paper faculty assign, rubrics and carefully developed prompts can ensure that the assignment is substantive. There are several Teaching Tips on Student Writing and Assessment which faculty and TAs may find helpful.

3) Effective Faculty Presentation (lectures, labs, seminars)

Students care deeply about the effectiveness of faculty presentations of material in their courses. They commented on structure, use of technology and the value of using a variety of media to the ability of a faculty member to reach a broad spectrum of learning styles. Sample comments included: a) “Lectures should be well organized and outlined”; b) “I learn best when the teacher mixes the media and approaches: slides + video + lecture + discussion all in one class in small, organized chunks”; c) “I learn best whenever professors are enthusiastic and actively engage the class instead of monotone lectures. PowerPoint presentations and handouts also help immensely”.

N.B. The Center’s Teaching and Persuasive Communication: Class Presentation Skills, available in both hard copy and online forms, may be a useful reference tool for faculty and TAs concerned about their effectiveness in this area. A revised edition will be forthcoming this fall. For those who are planning to use instructional technology in their courses, including PowerPoint, the Teaching Tip “Preparing to Use Instructional Technology” may be useful.

4) Assignments which are connected to course learning goals

Respondents were aware of the kinds of assignments which were most likely to help them learn the material, both outside and inside class. Students stated that they learned 1) “when the readings and assignments match up well with what’s going on in class”; b) when they know “what the instructor wants me to get out of a particular assignment -there are set milestones on the way to completing a large assign-

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News of the Center

Sheridan Center welcomes new Associate Director for the Life and Physical Sciences

It is with great pleasure that we welcome Kathy M. Takayama, Ph. D. to the Sheridan Center as Associate Director for the Life and Physical Sciences. After a careful search involving members of the University senior administration, faculty Advisory Board, Center Faculty Fellows, graduate students and staff, the Center was delighted to have Dr. Takayama accept its offer to join the Center and the University community.

Dr. Takayama holds a B.S. in Biology from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and a Ph.D. in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology from UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. She was an NIH Postdoctoral Fellow from 1991-1993 in the Department of Biochemistry at the University of Madison-Wisconsin.

In 1994 Dr. Takayama joined the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia, where she continued her research in the regulation of bacterial RNA processing, and was appointed to the faculty as a Senior Lecturer (tenured) in the School of Biotechnology and Biomolecular Sciences. In addition to her work on RNA regulation, she has engaged in cross-disciplinary research on the impact of visualizations on learning in the sciences and has published several papers and a book chapter on this work.

Dr. Takayama has been awarded the UNSW Vice Chancellor's Award for Teaching Excellence, the Australian College of Educators New South Wales Quality Teaching Award, and the Australian Society for Microbiology David White Award for Excellence in Teaching. In 2003, she was selected by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching as the first Carnegie Scholar from Australasia. She is a founding member of the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSOTL) and served as ISSOTL's first Regional VP for Australasia, and Chair of the 4th ISSOTL

Conference in Sydney. After 13 years in Australia, she will move back to the US in August to join the Sheridan Center. In addition to her work in the scholarship of teaching and learning, Kathy has been extensively involved in outreach projects for elementary schools and museums, and has mentored underprivileged children in the sciences.

The Sheridan Center will host an Open House in September to give all members of the University community a chance to come and meet Dr. Takayama. We hope that you will help us welcome her to Brown. ❖

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ture material, and problem set development. The topics selected are extremely focused to make the assignment doable in a reasonable amount of time. I encouraged the students while working on the assignment, to reflect on lectures/seminars/classes and problem sets that they found particularly helpful, as well as those that were not conducive to learning. For example, methods without applications or examples from the literature can be difficult for students to place in context. Likewise, formulas without examples to demonstrate their application, interpretation, etc. seem more challenging than the presentation of formulas with such teaching aids. Part of the objective of the assignment is for students to pay attention to how they learn. I want them to appreciate that learning is a process and an important aid in their own learning is sharing their knowledge with others.

I received positive feedback on this learning exercise. Yet, the exercise was extremely difficult to maintain as it was incredibly labor intensive for me to tailor the topics and individually mentor the students through the process. I also found it difficult to provide immediate opportunities for students to refine and deliver their teaching module in a timely fashion and meet the other course objectives. As a result, I turned to two other courses I typically teach to identify time within each for students to run "mini-lectures". I realized that in the context of the applied papers and projects students worked on for class, often students learned a method or concept beyond the scope of the course objectives, but of interest to all. If so, I encouraged students to share their experience by giving a 15 minute teaching module complete with handout, example of computer code if necessary, and tips. Their classmates may not be ready to fully absorb what is taught at that moment but several things occur. First, exposure to the

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Students

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ment'; c) "when I think that the material from outside of the class, predominantly reading, are neither summarized during lecture nor neglected from being engaged"; d) "when I am held accountable for readings" and e) "most in classes in which there are frequent assessments of understanding, be they daily/weekly quizzes or active discussions of the reading materials."

N.B. Teaching Tip "Redesigning Course Assessments" by Eileen Landay and *The Teaching Exchange* article "Constructive Student Assessment and Course Evaluation" are available on the Center's web site.

5) Active Learning (hands on experiences, process-based)

Many students indicated that they have a well-developed sense of their own learning style: visual, kinesthetic, or auditory, as well as active versus passive reception of data. Here are some sample responses: a) "I learn best when I am a partner in the learning process, rather than a receptacle to be filled with information"; "I learn best when there's no pressure to be perfect, to have to get everything right. I write best when I think of a paper as a work in progress - that one's always doing what one can, at this moment, to make it as good as can be. The process, not the finished product, helps me learn" and c) "I work hands-on with what ever I'm studying. I really like to apply what I learn and not just talk theory."

N.B. Interested faculty and TAs may find Prof. Brian Hayden's Handbook "Teaching to Variation in Learning" (available in hard copy and online forms) useful. Making sure that your courses reach the broadest range of learning styles are also addressed in two other resources on the Center's web site: "Implementing Universal Instructional Design in College Courses" and "Signs of Diverse Learning Styles: Hints for Instructors."

6) Faculty Mentoring (recognition of students by faculty)

Brown students are clear that they believe that direct contact with faculty and TAs, whether in sections or labs, as advisors/mentors or even large lecture classes, improves the quality of their learning experience. Amongst the respondents who stated this view were the following thoughts: a) "I learn best when the teacher seems to care about how I apply the material, whether he or she explains to me why my paper/project is significant or interesting or goes out of the way to give me solid feedback. I tend to learn best when the teacher knows my name and asks me personal questions before class. That makes me think 'If I get stuck, this professor is going to know my name and will probably try as hard as possible to help me.'"; or b) "Close professor-student relations give me the opportunities to ask questions about and offer interpretations on the material, and such opportunities greatly add to my learning experience. In large lecture classes, in which such relations are impossible, accessible TAs and faculty members are extremely valuable in improving my learning experience."

N.B. Faculty and TAs may find starting the course off with a questionnaire for students about their learning goals as well as their level of expertise, useful. The Teaching Tip "Identifying your Audience - Student Questionnaire" provides a sample you may adapt for your own course.

7) Student Presentations in class

Presentations by students in class were frequently mentioned by students as a useful means of rehearsing what they were learning to solidify learning. For example, students stated that class presentations offered a) "a creative way to present it, or teach it to the class. I feel that when I can effectively teach something, I really get an understanding of the material" or b) "student presentations force you to describe an issue that you understand at great depth at a level that makes it approachable for people with little to no

background in the subject. That means that you really understand the topic."

It was clear however, that students were aware that presentation assignments needed to be well-planned by the faculty member to ensure that the experience was a productive one: a) "Student presentations are good, but need structure to ensure participation by other students (such as requiring other students send in questions about the reading beforehand)" or b) "Preparing presentations is useful, but listening to other student presentations is less helpful. They can take up a significant amount of class time and are often on highly specific topics that only the presenters have enough background knowledge to understand."

N.B. There are two "Teaching Tips" on the Center website dealing with Student Presentations.

8) Class size

Class size proved to be an important issue for many students, in particular small classes, regardless of whether or not they are seminars or lectures. In fact, one student expressed the opinion that even large lecture classes could be made more effective through a thoughtful teaching strategy. Here are some examples of how students believe they learn best: a) "This means that the classes have to be small. The best class I've ever taken here was my first-year-seminar because the teaching was so accessible to all of us"; b) "I learn best in smaller classes where students realize that discussion is an integral part of the course are much more interesting because the students do the work since it is obvious if they don't, and everyone learns much more through this dynamic interaction"; and c) "I learn best when discussions or problem sessions are done in small groups of about 5-10. Of course lectures and sections exceed this size, but I think large classes can be broken down into more effective, small groups. Then the small groups can share their solution/conclusion to the larger whole."

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Lippitt House

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officer of the Rhode Island National Guard 103rd Field Artillery in 1963.

After law school Mr. Lippitt returned to Providence to join the law firm of Edwards & Angell. He was a partner in the firm for thirty years and served twice as head of the firm's executive committee. He served on the boards of the Gorham Company, Rhode Island Hospital Trust National Bank, Keypoint Life Insurance Company, the Quill Company and the Meehan Fund. He was Vice Chairman of the Providence Redevelopment Agency.

He served as a member of the Rhode Island House of Representatives from 1961 to 1983, including ten years as House Minority Leader. He worked for improved government procedures, Medicare for the elderly, and stronger open meeting and conflict of interest laws. Influenced by his experience in World War II, he strongly supported minority rights and was particularly instrumental in the passage of Rhode Island's Fair Housing Practices Act of 1968.

He ran unsuccessfully for Mayor of Providence three times, losing by only a few hundred votes in 1984 and 1990. His opponents recognized his commitment to the people of Providence. Mayor Joseph Paolino appointed him a judge of the Housing Court for 1989-90. From 1985-1989 he served as Director of the Department of Administration for the State of Rhode Island.

For fifty years he devoted himself to charitable and civic causes, including serving as senior Fellow of Brown University, Chairman of the Board of Rhode Island Hospital, Chairman of the Board of the Providence Plan, Head of the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education, and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of St Mark's School.

In his service to Brown University, he was particularly committed to undergraduate education, the Department of Public Policy, minority affairs, the John Carter Brown Library and the improvement of



L-R: Simmons, Vascellaro, Tisch, T. More, Lippitt Dedication plaque, Langlois, R. More

the campus. At his death he was the last lifetime Fellow. He was an early supporter of the innovative Metropolitan Career and Technical School in Providence. He also served on the Boards of the Rhode Island School of Design, the Nature Conservancy, the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, the John E. Fogarty Foundation for the Mentally Retarded, the Boys and Girls Clubs of Providence, the Trust for Public Lands and the Southside Community Land Trust. As part of his vision for Providence, as Chairman of the Providence Plan, he led the effort to raise over twelve million dollars to restore the Woonasquatucket River and the adjacent greenway that now boasts three parks and the Buttonhole Golf Course.

Mary Ann Lippitt (1918 – 2006) was a path-breaking aviator and owner of Lippitt Aviation. She graduated from the Foxcroft School in 1936. As a teenager she enrolled in the first Gray Ladies training class and the first nurses aide class for the Rhode Island Red Cross. She took special Red Cross training at Ft. Devens during World War II for work with psychiatric patients. In 1944 she learned to fly and in 1946 formed Lippitt Aviation at Hillsgrove Airport, now T. F. Greene Airport. During the 26 years she owned the company Miss Lippitt taught flying and operated a charter flight service with a fleet of up to four planes. The GI Bill financed the

tuition of many of her early students. A Providence Journal article from 1946 on Miss Lippitt's new business reported that "her personality must have been designed to win the friendship and confidence of people who want to fly."

After selling her company, Miss Lippitt devoted herself to charitable and civic causes, including serving as Chairman of the Board of the Greater Rhode Island Chapter, Providence Region, of the Red Cross, President of the Boards of Bannister House and the Women's Center, and Board Member of the Providence Public Library, Gordon School, John Hope Settlement House, the Animal Rescue League, Preserve Rhode Island and Community Prep.

Miss Lippitt made significant donations to many local charities including the Providence Public Library, which has named the exhibition hall at the Central Branch in her honor; Brown University, where she funded professorships in the Medical School; and Butler Hospital, where she and her brother made a leadership gift to fund the new building, named in the Lippitts' honor, which houses the Senior center for the treatment of Alzheimers and other acute psychiatric illnesses

Individually and together, Frederick Lippitt and Mary Ann Lippitt generously supported many civic and educational

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Students

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N.B. There are several books in the Sheridan Center Resource Library on how to manage lecture courses to simulate small class sorts of learning experiences. In addition, faculty may wish to see the suggestions of their colleagues in the Teaching Tip “Strategies for Teaching Large Classes: Recommendations from Brown Faculty” on the Center’s web site.

9) Material connected to “real life application, including service learning

Many students expressed a preference for learning about a subject through “real life” application in class or having a service learning component be carefully incorporated into the course goals and objectives. They were clear that such a learning experience could occur in courses across the curriculum, not just those traditionally associated with social service work. For example, students stated that they learn best when a) “learning takes place in a real life setting with real life consequences and accountability” or b) “I learn best experientially, when I am learning through hands on, first hand experience with the material. I learn best through service learning and when I feel as though my knowledge will lead to positive change in the world, when I feel as though the knowledge I am accruing is relevant” and c) “Service learning has been a powerful learning tool for me.”

N.B. Faculty wishing to learn more about how to incorporate service learning into their courses should contact the Swearer Center. Swearer Center Senior Associate Director Kerrissa Heffernan has written a helpful manual on how to accomplish this goal and a copy is available in the Sheridan Center Resource Library.

10) Well-organized course with clear goals and objectives

Students feel that courses in which the educational goals and objectives are transparent facilitate the quality of their learning: a) “I learn best when provided a clear and accurate syllabus so I am not required

to frantically check a wiki or blog multiple times a day wondering if I have missed something” and b) “I learn best when a course is highly structured and the professor makes use of outlines or visual materials to help organize class content. In addition to helping me understand how the parts of the lecture fit together, this format tends to prevent instructors from straying too far from the topic at hand.”

Students value courses in which “the professor is organized with a power point, important picture slides on webct, etc.; sticks to the syllabus very well; the paper questions are posted far in advance so that the students can organize their time (with their other classes and extracurriculars)” and those in which the faculty member has carefully planned the structure of the course assignments in order to ensure a productive learning experience, as in “I learn best when everyone has done their reading prior to the class meeting, and we use class time to solidify and expand our understanding of the material through small group and class wide discussions. . . .the best course format for my learning. The material was presented in case study form; we held study group meetings to discuss the material prior to the seminar meeting. We also wrote short memos prior to class (which could be amended after class if our views had changed). [The professor] acted more as a facilitator of class discussion than a lecturer.”

N.B. The Center’s “Constructing a Syllabus” Handbook (available both in hard copy and online forms) may provide useful suggestions to address these concerns.

11) Group Projects

While the preponderance of students expressed a preference for independent work, especially papers, many students also expressed a preference for group projects. They understood the educational value of such collaborative work: “Group projects are also beneficial, as I have found that collaborating with other students helps me in further understanding material brought up in class.” On the other hand many students stated that group projects require careful

monitoring by faculty in order to ensure that everyone is learning, “Group projects are great in small seminars in which the course itself is a group project of sorts and working in smaller groups allows students to focus even more and to enter even further into meaningful dialogue with each other (an extension of the dialogue that has been going on in class). I dread group projects in larger classes wherein not all the students may be as ‘integrated’ into the course and as interested in it.”

N.B. The Sheridan Center Resource Library contains several articles on teaching through group projects.

12) Critical Reading of course materials

Explicit “critical reading” during class is deemed a useful learning tool by a number of students. They value the chance to use class time to develop a deeper level of understanding of a text, as in a) “I learn best when assigned reading is dissected and discussed in class rather than left for students to interpret on their own” or “when the class focuses on examples specific enough to go in-depth (rather than ‘breezing through’ a thousand topics per day, barely touching on them). This is the greatest flaw I have seen in my classes here at Brown.”

N.B. There are two Sheridan Center Teaching Tips on this methodology on the website.

13) Assessment forms which promotes learning

Finally, several students addressed the issue of assessment and how it impacts their learning. Comments included concerns about rigorous feedback on writing and the types of tests which students found helped them master the material assigned in the course. For example, one student remarked “all tests should have some problem solving or short answers – only multiple choice is very impersonal and does not access the creativity of our understanding, both in science and the humanities.”

N.B. Faculty and TAs may find several of the Center’s Teaching Tips on Assessment of Students helpful as they design and teach their courses. ❖

Graduate Students

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concepts plants the seeds for future growth. Second, the student who immersed themselves in the topic gains a greater level of mastery by organizing their thoughts for teaching and facilitating the active discussion stimulated by the presentation. Lastly, the student then becomes “the expert” on the topic for the learning community. In addition to the mini-teaching modules, students in dissertation phase become expert in the methodological issues that stimulate new directions for research. If this occurs and there is sufficient overlap with course objectives, I will work with the student to develop, refine, and deliver modules on their area of expertise. I believe this approach is rewarding for the advanced graduate student to hone their skills and deepen their knowledge of their research through their teaching. It is rewarding for the first/second year students to learn from a colleague, to see where they will be in a very short time, and to have access to a greater number of facilitators of knowledge. Further, I am rewarded as I stand back in awe as the students continue to spread their wings and apply the technique to teach self, and then teach others.

Teaching students how to ask good questions

A few months ago, I was having lunch with a group of students at a well-established, well-regarded graduate program. I was extremely curious about the process through which students learned how to define their dissertation scope. How did they learn to ask good questions? Having trained at Brown and being on the faculty my entire career, I wanted to learn more about this particular component of training at other leading programs. I was actually taken aback to learn that the norm at this well-regarded program was that faculty and research collaborators doled out topics as suited the particular projects at the moment. I recognize that this approach would probably be more cost-

efficient and easier for trainer and student alike. Yet, I believe that this component is critical in developing the independent lifelong learner.

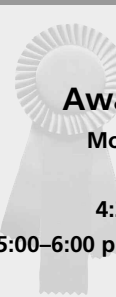
From the first day in the program, the students are encouraged to look within to understand more about themselves and what their research passions are. Throughout their graduate experience students are expected to actively participate by asking questions in class, in journal club, at seminars, etc. In many classes, students expand their portfolio by defining questions for projects and papers. It is customary for students to present their work at national and international meetings. Exposure to different trains of thought provide additional stimulus for learning. Before the meeting, students are encouraged to flip through the meeting materials and circle what is of interest to them. During the meeting, students are advised to pay careful attention to which sessions (of concurrent sessions of interest) they actually attended. What sessions were most engaging? What questions piqued their intellectual curiosity the most? This approach acknowledges that the “good” questions are ones that keep you thinking in the shower, at two in the morning, during traffic jams, or you keep thinking about while you sleep.

Despite early interventions in the craft of asking questions, the critical phase remains the post comprehensive exam period. In our program, this phase of training typically takes 9-12 months during which students define three related research questions that each provides innovation to their discipline. The end result becomes three peer-reviewed papers. At the onset, I encourage students to think about their ultimate next step post-graduation. In what setting do they want to serve? Industry? Government? University? What methods would they like to refine? What topics excite them? Essentially, I encourage them to view the dissertation as the ultimate opportunity for self-exploration and discovery. Each student approaches this phase uniquely, but common to all is the reflective practice students bring to the process. Stu-

dents meet regularly with various faculty members, students who’ve completed the process, and former graduates. With each defining step, they immerse themselves into the literature to understand the complexities of the substantive area, as well as the methods applied. Considering the strong foundations of their coursework, these test the limits of their learning by stretching their imaginations in surprising ways. Appreciate that this phase remains a challenging, soul searching, and life defining exercise for students. They must ultimately set their course. As a result of the process, students find questions everywhere and are encouraged to keep a notebook of questions to research after their dissertation is complete. How does the transformation occur? I believe this is so because the questions that define the scope of their dissertation work have come from within, are consistent with their goals and values, and set the stage for their lifelong learning. How satisfying to participate in this process!

How does a graduate trainer know if they have achieved their goal of facilitating the development of an independent lifelong learner? It is pretty clear. You have done your job as graduate trainer well when your role in the student’s learning experience is unnecessary and the only thing left to do is to step aside and watch your graduate soar. Are the methods described above useful in assisting in the development of independent lifelong learners? I believe so. Are there more methods, techniques, and strategies others employ to assist our students? Of this, I am positive and I am anxious to partici-

SAVE THE DATE!



**University
Awards Ceremony**
Monday, May 5, 2008
Sayles Hall
4:30 p.m. Reception
5:00–6:00 p.m. Presentation of Awards

Lippitt House

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causes. Their leadership in establishing a Senior Treatment/Geriatric Care Specialty Unit at Butler Hospital was recognized when the building was named in their honor. At Brown they established the Anton/Lippitt Fund for Public Policy at Brown University. The University recognized their services to the community by awarding them the President's Medal in 2004. Upon their respective deaths, the Lippitts left a legacy of support that includes, among others, four endowed professorships, an endowment for the Sheridan Center, and an endowment for women's athletics. The Sheridan Center endowment funds professional development opportunities for faculty and graduate students that will help ensure enduring excellence in undergraduate, graduate, and medical education at Brown.

The Lippitt House at 96 Waterman Street stands as a testament to the Lippitts' commitment to education as the foundation for a responsible democratic society. It houses the Harriet W. Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning at Brown University. ♦

THE TEACHING EXCHANGE *depends on you*

The Sheridan Center depends upon the generosity of so many members of the Brown community who make contributions to *The Teaching Exchange*. We invite each of you to contribute anything you think might be of interest to your colleagues, whether an article, a book review, or a description of a teaching innovation you have tried or designed. We especially urge you to consider submitting an article on your innovations in the classroom or laboratory or other learning environment.

The Teaching Exchange is published twice a year and submission deadlines are July 15 for the September issue and December 15 for the January/February issue. Contributions or suggestions may be e-mailed to Sheridan_Center@Brown.edu.

For a complete listing of all Sheridan Center events
for 2007–2008, please see our web site.

www.brown.edu/sheridan_center

THE TEACHING

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