



THE BEACON



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Upcoming Events

Faculty Development Luncheons hosted by the Center for Teaching and Learning. Guest presenters from the Fischler School of Education and Human Services. **Dates:** October 27 and November 18. Topic: October 27th will be *"Presenting in the Classroom."* with Dana Scott Mills and Mike Simonson.

"Stats Boot Camps": hosted by the Statistical Consulting Group. Dates: October 29, November 10, January 13, February 11, March 10, and April 14. Each session is separate, so feel free to come to only one or as many as you would like. October 29th is with Dean Arneson on Comparing Group.

All sessions will be held in the Chancellor's Dining Room, 5th floor of the Terry Building, from noon to 1:30 p.m. Lunch will be provided. RSVP to Kathleen Hagen at extension 1235 or khagen@nsu.nova.edu no later than 3 days before each session.

TOM CRUISE SAVES FAILING STUDENT

by Kathleen Hagen

I've always considered myself the prototypical professional student. Dean's list, honor roll, graduating cum laude. I'm never happier than when sitting in a classroom, learning some unusual concept. Through countless hours of college credit, I've explored a diverse curriculum: history, English, French, Spanish, Latin, writing, psychology, music, speech, physics, algebra, geometry, trigonometry, chemistry, biology, anatomy, physiology, accounting. No matter the course, I've always enjoyed learning the material and never had a problem adjusting my mind set to that of the field I was studying. Never, that is, until this past summer when I found myself in a coin grading class.

My husband is an avid coin collector. Lately it has dawned on us that should he "precede me in death" (such a graceful phrase for such an ugly idea), I would be left with what has grown to be a substantial collection. (Just to keep anyone from hatching criminal ideas - the coins are all tucked away in a large safety deposit box at the bank.) Sending an unknowledgeable seller to a coin dealer is sending a lamb to the wolves. I have no desire to be the grieving widow who loses thousands of dollars through ignorance of the value of her husband's collection. So, the quest for enlightenment was on.

My husband found that the American Numismatic (that means pertaining to coins) Association holds annual summer conferences on a variety of numismatic topics. Included in this year's schedule was a one-week course in grading US coins. Perfect! We arranged to take the class together and worked our summer vacation plans around it. However, there was one small, black cloud at the edge of my mental horizon. I have no interest in coins and no knowledge of them. The designs hold no aesthetic appeal for me (except I do like it when they're really shiny) and I get no thrill in realizing I'm holding a piece of history. When I shared my doubts with my husband, he reassured me that I would be fine. "After all, you'll be in your favorite place in the world - a classroom. And I'll be taking the class along with you. You'll have a great time!" I calmed my fears by reflecting that the magic of the classroom had never failed me and mustered all my enthusiasm for the trip.

The class was formatted into 9 3-hour sessions over 4 ½ days. The instructors were a top grader from a top grading service and a well-respected coin dealer. I knew I was in trouble by the end of the first session. The classroom magic wasn't kicking in. I couldn't arouse any interest in the topic. In fact, I was hostile towards it. I resented my husband for getting me into this; I resented his collection (thinking of it as an albatross around my neck); and I resented my fellow 30 classmates, most of whom had been collecting coins since childhood, for caring about such a stupid topic. I did a rotten job of grading and I didn't care. I couldn't make myself engage in any of the behaviors which would improve my

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FOCUS ON EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH: DEEP vs. SURFACE LEARNING

by Patrick Hardigan, Ph. D.

The term "climate" refers to how an educational environment is perceived by students. This climate has been found to strongly influence student behavior and contribute to student achievement, satisfaction, and success. Student perceptions of quality teaching and appropriate assessment have also shown to predict a deep approach to learning---deep approaches to learning consistently result in better learning outcomes (Seabrook, 2004).

A student may either remember something or not, but understanding is not the same as remembering. Understanding something can be on many levels. Deep learning involves understanding (Rhem, 1995a). Deeper understanding may come from seeking meaning and forming your own ideas and opinions on the topic, especially when you are really interested in the topic (Rhem, 1995b).

Marton and Saljo (1975, 1976) conducted a study pertaining to the concept of a student's approach to learning. They found that many students did not get the point of what they were reading. Students were looking for the facts they thought they would be tested on. They were not looking for the meaning of the text. For them, the meaning of the text stood in direct relation to the way they expected to be assessed. They were taking what has become known as a "surface approach" rather than a "deep approach" to learning.

What are the characteristics of courses that incline students toward a surface approach? Here is a short list (Rhem, 1995b):

- An excessive amount of material in the curriculum
- Relatively high class contact hours
- An excessive amount of course material
- A lack of opportunity to pursue subjects in depth
- A threatening and anxiety provoking assessment system.

Interestingly, Rhem's studies suggest that students progressively drop a deep approach to learning as they move through high school and college.

Many of the items listed above can be found in health profession schools and this often manifests itself when a student reaches his/her advanced years. Seabrook (2004) found that medical students expressed surprise when they realized that the early years of the curriculum had not prepared them for the clinical years in terms of knowledge or method of learning required. Specifically, students found that they had insufficient knowledge to answer the kinds of questions physicians would ask, which required them to recognize disease from a patient's history and signs.

Changing the culture of health professional education to address this issue may be difficult. As Genn (2001) argues, "The working or organizational environment of faculty is inextricably bound with the educational environment of students, and is a strong determinant of that educational environment." Unfortunately, it was also discovered that health profession educators worked under considerable pressures and constraints, and did not consider their teaching to be valued by the school. (Seabrook, 2003; 2004).

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Quotes to Brighten Your Day

God doesn't require us to succeed, He only asks that we try.

Mother Theresa

Those who bring sunshine to the lives of others cannot keep it from themselves.

James Matthew Barrie

Dance as though no one is watching you, love as though you have never been hurt before, sing as though no one can hear you, live as though heaven is on earth.

Souza

It ain't what you don't know that gets you into trouble. It's what you know for sure that just ain't so.

Mark Twain

Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go.

T.S. Eliot

Once we stretch our mind around a new idea, it never returns to its former shape.

Oliver Wendell Holmes

Hide not your talents. They for use were made. What's a sundial in the shade?

Ben Franklin

If you think education is expensive, try ignorance.

Derek Bok

The illiterates of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn.

Alvin Toffler

Share your knowledge. It's a way to achieve immortality.

Dalai Lama

ASK THE EXPERTS: "FACULTY EVALUATION FAQs"

by Kathleen Hagen

NSU began moving toward an online evaluation system for its faculty in the fall of 2003. The system works well, but some faculty members have been confused or frustrated with the process. Below are answers to the most common problems faculty encounter.

I CAN'T ACCESS THE EVALUATION SITE.

1) The address must be typed correctly. It is: www.nova.edu/online_evaluations. Note that there is an underscore between the words online and evaluations. 2) The online evaluation system works best with more up-to-date computers. Check and make sure you have a current browser and operating system. 3) Try using Internet Explorer. The system doesn't do as well with NetScape Navigator.

If you are doing everything right and using the correct equipment and still having problems, please contact Kathleen Hagen (khagen@nsu.nova.edu).

I'VE BEEN NOTIFIED THAT I HAVE EVALUATIONS READY TO BE VIEWED, BUT I CAN'T ACCESS THEM.

1) Make sure you use the correct user name and password. The user name is the same as your NSU e-mail account name. If you don't know your password, contact Karen Perez at kperez@nsu.nova.edu. 2) Some faculty have had problems with being entered in Banner twice with slightly different user names or passwords. If you suspect that may be the problem, contact Kathleen Hagen (khagen@nsu.nova.edu). 3) When you see the list of evaluations just click on the course code (example ANA 5724) to access the report. 4) You may be attempting to access the evaluations too early. You'll know this if nothing happens when you click the course code. It may be that you were notified too early. In order to reinforce students' belief in the confidentiality of their evaluations, faculty are not able to access them until 16 days after the evaluation closed. When classes are chosen to be evaluated, it's easy for the data entry person to make a mistake and have the system notify faculty when the course ends rather than when they can access the evaluations. If you are notified soon after the course ends, that is possibly what happened. Another possibility is that the evaluation window was extended to allow students more time to complete their evaluation obligations. In that case, you would have to wait 16 days after the new close date of the evaluation. No evaluation can be opened longer than 30 days after the course is closed, so the maximum time you would have to wait to access your evaluations is 46 days.

I TAUGHT CLASSES BUT DON'T HAVE ACCESS TO MY EVALUATIONS.

1) The College of Optometry and College of Dental Medicine do not have separate faculty and course evaluations. In those colleges, students evaluate only the course and the name at the top of the evaluation is the name of the instructor of record. Except for the Dean of each college, only the instructor of record has access to the course evaluation. 2) If you are not part of the College of Optometry or College of Dental Medicine, but still don't have access to any evaluations, check with your departmental secretary (who is probably the person who entered the classes to be evaluated). In some colleges, not every class is evaluated. It's possible that the class(es) you taught were not chosen for evaluation. 3) If none of these scenarios seems correct, contact Kathleen Hagen (khagen@nsu.nova.edu).

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Stan's Soap Box

The Heart of Medicine...

What happens to the personal dreams of service that we hear about from students during their initial interviews for admission? When asked what is more important: compassion and empathy, or medical competence, they usually respond that both are essential. We know we can educate students in the medical and clinical sciences. With technology and computers we can help them become life-time learners. We can teach them how to find new information, how to read the literature, and in fact, to keep up with an explosion in medical knowledge. Having said that, can we also educate our students to personally relate to the core values of service, compassion, courage, love, and, above all, reverence for life? Can we include in all our courses legitimate dialogue dealing with patients in the area of service, calling, mission, and the true spirit of medical practice? I believe we can. But, we need our own, personal commitment that service underlies scientific medicine and is independent of expertise. I believe such a working commitment is contagious to students in the health professions. When students who have been infected with this commitment to service graduate, they will validate their personal dreams of service through their medical practice. In fact, they will not only be a blessing to their patients, but their patients will be a blessing to them.

How do we make this glorious dream a reality? It starts with simply caring about patients. Patients need to know they matter to their health care professionals. Our students can observe this behavior in our own clinics when they see their professors relating to real patients. Students can also see caring behaviors in the many rotations they have. We need to carefully assess their rotation mentors - are the mentors people who can evoke and make visible the heart and spirit of medicine? And, we can nurture our students and continually remind them of the desires that first lead them into a health profession. The desire to heal, the desire to help, the desire to serve.

Suggested Reading:

Remen, Rachel (1996). *Kitchen Table Wisdom*. New York: Riverhead Books.

Remen, Rachel (2000). *My Grandfather's Blessings*. New York: Riverhead Books.

Remen, Rachel (1994). *Wounded Healers: A book of poems by people who have had cancer and those who love and care for them* (ed.). Bolinas, CA: Wounded Healer Press.

Sulmasy, Daniel P. (1997). *The healer's calling: a spirituality for physicians and other health care professionals*. New York: Paulist Press.

FACULTY EVALUATION FAQs (continued from Page 3)

THESE EVALUATION REPORTS DON'T MAKE SENSE TO ME.

Some colleges (College of Pharmacy and College of Allied Health) group questions with similar themes into sections. For those colleges, there is a section score obtained by averaging the scores for all the questions in the section. After all the section, there is a breakdown of the scores for each question in each section. That is followed by a comments section. For the other colleges, each question is listed with its scores, followed by a comments section.

WHAT DO THESE STATISTICS MEAN?

1) **Mean and median.** The mean is the average of scores. The median is the point at which half the responses are larger, half are smaller. [For example, let's say your responses were 2, 3, 4, 5, 5. The mean is 3.8 (2+3+4+5+5/5). The median is 4.] 2) **Standard deviation.** In this context, standard deviation deals with the distribution of responses. If most of your students answered a certain way, your standard deviation would be small. If your students had a wide variety in their responses, your standard deviation would be larger. Even with a great variety in the responses, it will not be a large number because student responses are limited to at most 0-5. Whether it is better to have a big standard deviation or a small one depends on what your score is. If you received mostly favorable responses from your students (had a high mean), you would want to see a small standard deviation, meaning that most of your students thought well of you and your teaching. If you did not get many favorable responses from your students (had a low mean), you would want to see a larger standard deviation - meaning that some of your students thought well of you and some did not.

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TOM CRUISE SAVES FAILING STUDENT *(continued from Page 1)*

performance. I didn't linger after class and ask questions, I didn't stay in the room during breaks to check on my mistakes. I didn't engage my classmates in discussions, I didn't think about the subject when I wasn't in class. For the first time in 39 years of schooling, I was going to fail a class. Nothing was working: not the fear of losing thousands of dollars if I didn't have some idea of what I was doing with my husband's collection, not the snob appeal of studying a subject with top notch teachers, not the competitive drive to be the best in the class.

This dismal state of affairs lasted for 5 sessions. Then, I thought about a line I heard right before I went on this odyssey. I was watching *Inside the Actors' Studio* and Tom Cruise was being interviewed. "Tell us, Tom, don't you sometimes find you have nothing to bring to a part? What do you do then?" Tom replied: "Sometimes late in the day when I'm tired I will approach a scene and realize I feel nothing. When that happens the important thing is to stay with that feeling. Don't start thinking, 'I can't feel anything! I'm going to lose my job! I'm going to fail!' Instead, start from, 'I don't feel anything' and stay with it. Say to yourself, 'I wonder what my character would do in this situation if he felt nothing?' And explore the situation from there." So, I started exploring the situation of hating my class, not from a viewpoint of how angry and resentful I was to be there, but from a viewpoint of "This is an interesting development for me. I wonder what I can learn from this?"

I did learn some important lessons in this class, completely separate from how to grade US coins.

- If this is what school feels like for average students, no wonder everyone thinks I'm strange to always want to take classes.
- Teachers deserve a lot more money for having to put up with students like I was in this class.
- Learning can be hard on your ego. Ego can get in the way of learning a subject, but you have to have some self-esteem to help overcome the waves of "I'm an idiot! I'll never understand this!" Feeling good about yourself and believing that you will eventually grasp a subject keeps you hanging in there when the going gets tough. I feel fortunate that I had a solid base of years of good classroom experiences before this class. I think for students who are younger or who haven't had many good experiences, having a teacher believe in them might make all the difference.
- For students who are having a hard time with a subject, hearing concepts explained by a classmate can really help bridge the distance between a student's understanding and the teacher's understanding.
- Motivation has to come from within. Despite all the reasons I had to want to do well in this class: fear of losing money if I didn't, wasting the tuition fee of a few hundred dollars, having great teachers, competitiveness with my husband; I didn't care about the class until I was able to find a spark of interest on a side topic. Oddly enough, the side topic was interest in what it felt like to be an uninterested student.

The happy ending to this story is that my tiny spark of interest began to spread. The next time the class broke into small groups for consensus grading, I participated more and paid more attention to what my classmates had to say. I found I had an easier time relating to their explanations of why they graded coins a certain way than my teachers' explanations. Then, my classmates' explanations served as a bridge to my teachers' explanations so that I was better able to understand them. I started looking at the world through a coin grader's mindset. When someone asked me how I was, I'd respond with a cheery, "I'm an EF 45!" (That's coin talk for the upper limits of Extra Fine.) I found myself judging metal objects by grading standards. Once, I saw a strip of chrome polished to a reflective surface and instead of thinking "mirror", thought, "That's a dimple!" (DMPL: Deep, Mirror, Proof-Like - more coin lingo.) By the end of the class I had improved enough to pass - tying with one of the better students! Best of all, I have more respect for my husband's hobby, a budding new skill for myself, and new insights into learning and teaching. That's a great return on my investment of 27 hours. *K.P.H.*

A condensed version of this article will appear in the October, 2004 issue of The Teaching Professor.

FACULTY EVALUATION FAQs *(continued from Page 4)*

You would also want to check the median, as the mean would have been dragged one direction or another by students who answered at the extreme of the responses. In that case, the median would give you a better idea of how the majority of your students felt. 3) **Reliability coefficient.** The reliability coefficient is a measure of the likelihood that you would receive similar scores if students were to do your evaluations again. It is better to have a higher number, but lower numbers do not mean that you are a bad teacher. They mean that the evaluation may not be a great measuring stick. One of the factors that would lead to a lower reliability coefficient is a small number of students responding to the evaluation. The highest possible reliability coefficient is a one. A 0.70 or higher would indicate a high reliability coefficient. You probably shouldn't expect a number higher than 0.5. 4) **N.** N is the number of responses. *K.P.H.*