

Chalk Dust

News, upcoming events, and current issues in teaching, learning, and assessment.

An Occasional Newsletter

Fall 2010



The Teaching & Learning Forum supports faculty development towards effecting student

learning. It works in concert with the Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Committee and is supported by the Office of Academic Affairs. We host events, retreats, discussion groups, forums, book groups, a new technology resource library, and workshops. Currently, the TLF is coordinated by Adam Johnston (Physics), and supported by Sheila Franklin (staff) and Victoria Green (hourly).

Contact us at x7667 or tforum@weber.edu, or stop by to visit in 057B in the Library.

Keep Up:

Getting the word out and promoting discussion and development are our biggest challenge. You can stay tuned in through any and all of these avenues:

- *Occasional Newsletter:* You're reading it.
- *Our webpage:* weber.edu/tlf -- This page hosts basic information and scheduled events, and also has links to all of the following resources:
- *Facebook:* see our link on the webpage, or search for "Teaching and Learning Forum, Weber State" for updates and reminders.
- *Wiki/Discussions/Calendar:* wiki.weber.edu/groups/TLF/ -- This is where we welcome your own contributions, especially those

related to our new technology library (see below), or as a new venue to report on book groups and other discussions. This site also hosts items from this newsletter and a semi-regular blog to generate discussion. You can subscribe to a feed to be notified of updates on these pages.

Upcoming:

- October 21:** Last Lecture & Faculty Forum
- February 5:** Adjunct Faculty Retreat
- March 22:** Teaching & Learning Symposium



More on Page 2

Tech Library now open!

Many recent advances in technology are touted to bring about reform and change the face of education. We can transfer ridiculous amounts of information at startling speeds and in compact devices. Yet, we probably said similar things at some time about the television and the telephone, not to mention the overhead projector and the film camera. Is there really anything to be gained by adopting these new technologies?

Thanks to a generous grant from ARCC, you can find out for yourself.

The Teaching & Learning Forum now hosts a small library of devices that could be used in your classroom, in community projects, in student work, in your own scholarship, or elsewhere. We encourage you to find out what the limits are for this year's technology, and how they could reform your teaching and other efforts.



- 2 Amazon Kindle and 1 Kindle DX (eReaders, each loaded with Book Group selections)
- Turning Technologies *Response Card* system (27 "clickers") and *Response Card XR* system (50 "clickers" with numeric entry and display)
- 2 Flip Mini HD cameras with small tripod
- 2 Digital Audio recorders

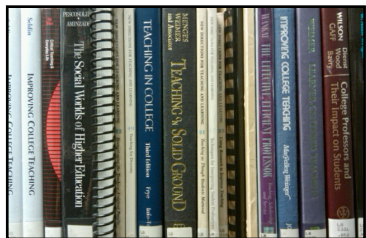
The Loan Process

Go to our webpage, weber.edu/tlf and link to the Technology Library. There you can find out what items we have available immediately, and you can fill out a proposal form to check out any item. You could even propose to use multiple items and/or check out materials for extended amounts of time, depending on your proposed project.

Once you've used any of these items, you are responsible for reporting back to the community about your experience. Our wiki allows you to do this easily, using your Weber login credentials. Go to wiki.weber.edu/groups/TLF/ to see other contributions.

COORDINATOR'S COLUMN:

In the library, the shelves of the LB 2300s are loaded, seemingly creaking with the weight of all the paper and cloth bindings. Every book I had in mind for this visit was there, patiently waiting. They were titles like Improving College Teaching, or Teaching on Solid Ground, and College Professors and Their Impact on Students. There they were, wedged and comfortably secured by the pinch of their own pages. Two copies of Improving College Teaching were there, like twins dressed in the same light blue outfit, posing for the photo.



These books and their pages are perennially poised and ready. I place a high value on having a grand repository of books that are so available. It's dependable and useful -- I can ask that the library carry a particular text and be relatively sure that it will be there when I need it. I like this. But I have to wonder what all of these books in

particular are doing on the shelves. Why aren't they all checked out? If we are the institution we claim, committed to a high quality undergraduate education and reflective instruction, what are these books doing? Are we simply too busy providing this high quality educational experience that we don't have any spare moment to reflect on how we're doing it?

How do I know these books are all checked in? On the adjacent shelf, a clearly old book called University Sketches, by John Newman, sits. This printing is about 100 years old. Even so, not all the pages have been opened. In fact, not all the pages have even been cut -- multiple places in the text can't physically be opened all the way because the top of each page was never completely separated from the next. What does it mean when a book about the foundations of the university, its purpose, and its method, has been sitting on a shelf, unread, for an entire century? And how many of the rest of these books might suffer the same fate?

It's not that we don't read. Close to 200 of you are engaged in TLF book groups right now. This semester, we added Louis Menand's The Marketplace of Ideas, which reminds us that the university system in our country was originally meant to train ministers; and even though our mission has changed our institutions haven't. What do we really mean when we say we're providing an education? Are we readying future researchers? Citizens? Are we cranking the economic engine? Are we simply producing the people who will fill our offices in a few years? I'm not sure. But I know that we not only get to chose what our role is, it's our responsibility. Frankly, I wonder how we're going to live up to it.

I'm not composing a guilt ridden diatribe that we faculty haven't eaten enough vegetables nor read enough books on professional development and the philosophy of the university system. Rather, I'm wondering this: What do we need? That's my job. If you have any insight, let me know. For now, I'm cracking open some old ideas that, I suspect, aren't really that much different from what we currently practice.

Adam Johnston, TLF Coordinator

Comments? See weber.edu/tlf and link to "Discussions and News" and then the "blog" link. You can discuss this and other items.

Lunch Discussions

Often, we host workshops for which there is some true authority and expertise. This is helpful for those things that we need to receive some training or wisdom. But, often, the ideas we need to engage with require interaction, debate, and construction. We've found that informal lunch discussions are good for this.

Watch for announcements about upcoming lunch discussions. We'll start planning two each month, each on different days of the week and each with different themes or twists. Coming up is our discussion on *Critical Thinking* and what exactly we mean by this. How do we engage students in something that we don't consistently define? Other discussions will consider the nature of scholarship and service, challenges in the classroom, and interactions with students.

Book Groups

Each semester we spend thousands of dollars on books and lunches -- and we're delighted to do this. TLF book groups bring together a diverse set of faculty and staff, as well as give you something to read and think about.

This year, we're asking that book groups submit their report to our wiki, where everyone can see what your group thought of the book. These reports are only useful if others get to read them. From the main webpage, weber.edu/tlf, select "book groups" and then the link to the wiki to submit these reports as well as read others.

Faculty Forum

Don't miss this year's faculty forum, where colleagues can share their work with others across campus! This Thursday, October 21st, at 2:00 - 4:00 PM in the Union Building. See our webpage and recent fliers for more detailed information. The event is kicked off with the Last Lecture at 1:00 PM . . .

"You Can't Make This Stuff Up; Or, Why the Wrestling Coach Failed"

This year's Last Lecture tradition continues this Thursday, October 21st at 1:00 PM in Union Ballroom C. In addition to honoring a faculty member and giving the community the opportunity to hear from an esteemed colleague, it provides a great way of opening the annual Faculty Forum festivities.

The naming of "Last Lecture" is sometimes critiqued for being confusing or even intimidating. To be clear, it is a *hypothetical* final presentation -- what would you present if it were your last presentation to our community? It's a fun topic to consider, and probably one that we should have more than one chance to consider in our careers. The tradition and naming is widespread at universities across the country.

This year's Last Lecturer is Gene Sessions, well known for his engaging history lectures as well as a long history of service to the university. When we asked Gene for a description of his talk, he decided to play his cards close to his vest, and instead only reveal his title, "You Can't Make This Stuff Up; Or, Why the Wrestling Coach Failed," and one other hint. He attached this photo of a handsome young man during his first year at Weber State University. Who this is, and what it has to do with his lecture, you'll just need to come to find out.

