

# CTE Notebook

Newsletter of the Reinert Center for Teaching Excellence

Volume 4, Issue 2, Autumn 2001

## The Passions of Our Life: A Faculty Member's Response to September 11th

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As I came into work on the 11th of September, I was thinking about my day in the usual way. Since the radio in my car doesn't work, I had no idea what was taking place in New York City. About 10AM, I went into the

Electrical Engineering Office in MDH and saw two secretaries frantically trying to get to a web site. As I casually asked if I could help, it was obvious to them that I didn't know what was going on. With tears welling up in her eyes, one turned to me and said that terrorists had attacked the World Trade Center with hijacked, commercial airplanes. As you can well imagine, I was dumbfounded at the senselessness of the tragedy.

It didn't take long for me to realize that this event was perhaps the most important event to occur since WWII. Comparisons with Pearl Harbor were being made in the media regularly. Although I didn't have a class on Tuesday, I have classes on Wednesday and Thursday, both of which have students from a variety of countries—including Arabic countries. Questions flooded my mind. What do I say to the students? Do I say anything at all? What legal issues do I need to consider? Whatever I say, I knew that I would have the undivided attention of the students. This was a good time to send an important message to them. But what message? The answer came to me as I reflected on what the event meant to me. I couldn't help but be reminded of another event in my life in 1995.

At that time, I was teaching a senior level Communications Systems course in the Electrical & Computer Engineering (ECE) department at Mississippi State University. This particular semester I had a student named Paul, who I noticed seemed very comfortable participating in the class discus-

sion. He was articulate, enthusiastic, and he wasn't afraid to ask questions. Although Paul didn't seem to be the most academically gifted of the students in class, he was by far the most diligent. I could see the time and care he put into his homework assignments. And when I assigned challenging homework, Paul always gave the best effort among his classmates in working towards a solution, though not always successful. Besides his schoolwork, Paul was an undergraduate research assistant in the department, earning about \$800 per month for over 20 hours per week of work. Needless to say, Paul was busy, but he always wore a smile.

One day in October, Paul did not show up to class, which was a first. I took attendance and made a note, but didn't really give it a second thought. After class another student came up to me and asked me if I heard the news. Heard what? He told me that Paul was killed by a drunk driver at 1AM the previous night. As you can well imagine, I was dumbfounded at the senselessness of the tragedy. This is exactly the way I felt on the morning of September 11 when I heard the news of the terrorist attacks.

It turns out that Paul was studying my Communications course until 1AM before heading home for some sleep. As the drunk driver swerved into his lane, he was unable to react in time and he was killed instantly. Upon hearing this, I couldn't help but feel some sense of responsibility. But my eyes were soon to be fully opened to the scope of the tragedy.

Paul was from Biloxi, Mississippi, which is a small town on the coast. I attended his funeral along with 400 other people. The church was packed with standing room only. It turned out that Paul had quite a few friends. He was very active in student government and his church. In fact, he was a friend of the president of the university, who sent a personal representative to the funeral because he couldn't attend himself.

Attending Paul's funeral gave me a sense of the many lives that Paul had touched while he was with us. It turns out that Paul was a good friend of the preacher's son, so the preacher had first-hand knowledge of Paul's life. He told us many things about Paul, but the most remarkable to me was the fact that of the \$800 per month that Paul earned, he gave \$400 per month to a charity that went to the poor in China.

As I found out, this was typical of Paul's character. He was compassionate for those who were less fortunate than him. He passionately valued friendship. He understood the privilege of being able to attend a university—and he understood the responsibility that accompanies that privilege. He understood the importance of his own spiritual growth, which he actively pursued with direct help from his local church preacher. He understood the importance of family. And there was much more.

As I told my classes this story, I summed up Paul's life by bringing attention to the fact that Paul lived his life *passionately*. He was passionate about his friendships, family, schoolwork, university, community, and church. There are times when I can't help but sense a lack of passion among the young people of our society today. I encouraged my students to reflect on what is important in their life and to pursue it *passionately*. Like things taken for granted, the preciousness of life only becomes clear when it is taken away and we feel the loss.

Paul recognized the value of his own life and what a privilege it was to be given an opportunity to live on earth. I can't help but wonder what Paul may have accomplished in his life had he lived through the accident. How many more lives might have been touched? As I think about the tragic terrorist attacks on September 11, I can't help but wonder how many Pauls our society lost. What a tragic loss for us all.

## A Reflection on SLU2000 Inquiry Courses

Saint Louis University is beginning the second year of a 2-year grant from the Hewlett Foundation, aimed at enhancing pedagogy. The special focus of the project is to work with the SLU2000 courses as they come on line. Specifically, goals include assessing the learning outcomes of these innovative courses, convening and supporting a forum for the faculty teaching these courses, and disseminating information about the methodologies. These activities are under Dr. Julie Weissman's direction.

Several of our SLU 2000 faculty were asked to reflect on their experiences in teaching their inquiry courses. We thought it would be interesting for faculty and students to hear what they have learned from their experiences.

### **Dr. Gregory Wolf** **Modern and Classical Languages**

I have been privileged to teach a SLU2000 course, German 210 which is a third-semester German language and culture course. My SLU2000 course affords me the opportunity to engage my students in ways that my colleagues at other universities might not be able to do. Starting with the small class size, the students take full advantage of the communicative approach of learning a language. In order to make a concrete connection from the classroom to the real world where German is spoken, read, and used on a daily basis, I have organized activities which aim to foster cultural awareness and pique students' interest in German culture. I have integrated events of the University's German House, which I direct, into the course. Students are required to attend weekly coffee hours held there, view films and documentaries, and attend lectures or special events. One aim of the course is to demonstrate how studying German can be related to their major and all other disciplines on campus. Students are encouraged to explore how German can help them in their major, and they present a research project near the conclusion of the year on German and their academic field of interest.

The capstone experience of my SLU2000 course is a German Immersion weekend at the University's Lay Station in Louisiana, MO. This event, which takes place from Friday afternoon to the following evening, is conducted entirely in German. Students spend one night in cabins at the field station,

organize and cook their own meals, and perform a variety of skits and other exercises designed to improve and hone their command of German. Not only have my students responded favorably to this overnight field trip, some have even wanted it to be extended one more day. If anything, my SLU2000 course enables students and professors to interact with one another in a meaningful, positive way, and in this more relaxed environment, students can take full advantage of the educational opportunities.

### **Dr. Russell Blyth** **Mathematics and Computer Science**

I am teaching MT-A125 Mathematical Thinking in the Real World, a SLU 2000 Freshman Seminar course aimed at students who need a math course to satisfy a core requirement, but who do not need any further math courses in their intended major. The class is designed to be a self-contained exploration of some of the great ideas and traditions of mathematics. The topics we cover include a preliminary week of solving various puzzles with mathematical undercurrents, then on to prime numbers (including public key codes, used for secure internet communications), infinity, topics in geometry (including the fourth dimension), topology (a looser study of shape than geometry), and chaos and fractals. Within each topic students come to a significant understanding of the mathematical principles involved, and are even introduced to and expected to reproduce some short proofs.

I take advantage of the limited class size (no more than 19 students) to fully utilize active learning strategies that I have used in a variety of classes over the past eight years. First of all, we are fortunate to have a textbook ideally suited to the course. The authors are enthusiastic and have written a very readable and friendly book. I assign students to read ahead and to try to tackle some of the exercises (called "Mindscapes") before coming to class. During class time we may discuss (in a whole group setting) the section just read for homework, and once in a while I may find it necessary to present in detail some material which the students have found challenging. However, the majority of class time is spent in small group activities. Many of the Mindscapes are ideal for such explorations. The text comes with a CD-

ROM of computer explorations. I have written a computer worksheet to explore public key codes, and we make extensive use of internet sources and activities. Computer software is particularly helpful for visualization when we study geometry, topology and fractals. My role during the group activities is as guide—I move from group to group prompting the students when they need help, or suggesting extensions of the activity when they are ready. I often also summarize the key concepts after the activity.

An innovative course such as this calls for a wide range of assessment techniques. In addition to regular hour tests and a final, which have diminished importance, I ask students to write a significant number of reflective paragraphs, several short essays (300 words or more), and to do creative projects on the fourth dimension and on fractals. Students also read two short stories ("Flatland" by Edwin A. Abbott and "... And he built a crooked house --" by Robert A. Heinlein) about (respectively) life in two and four dimensions. I have found that the variety of activities the students undertake engages them deeply with the mathematics we study, and find that before the semester is over all of the students explicitly mention how much more they see mathematics in the world around them. Students who started the class expressing a definite disdain for mathematics are leaving both with an appreciation for its beauty and power and with a sense that they really do understand some nontrivial mathematical ideas. And they had fun doing it! (Cont'd. on pg. 3)



Pictured above: Dr. Paige Turner addressing student questions after CTE Seminar at Ringenberg Lecture Hall on the Health Sciences Campus.

(A REFLECTION ON SLU2000  
INQUIRY COURSES cont'd. from pg.2)

**Dr. Anneke Bart**

**Mathematics and Computer Science**

This semester I am teaching Math and the Art of Escher for the second time. This course, together with Mathematical Thinking in the Real World, makes up our collection of freshman seminars in mathematics. These courses are aimed at students in the humanities, and try to give a survey of some of the great ideas of Mathematics. In the back of my mind I relate all the topics back to the main principles of mathematics: abstract, critical and analytical thinking, pattern recognition and problem-solving techniques. In Math and Escher we use art to motivate several interesting topics in geometry. We start off the semester by looking at tessellations (think wallpaper pattern), we move from that to spherical and hyperbolic geometry; we explore infinity, the fourth dimension, and many other topics. This interdisciplinary approach allows us to move away from compartmentalized learning. It also allows the students to really develop their mathematical intuition. We look at many different geometrical concepts, but we always have some art in mind that we are trying to better understand. The use of art in this mathematics course also allows for a field trip to the Saint Louis Art Museum. Relating the material we cover to exhibits in a museum allows the students to integrate the material they learned into their real life experience.

This approach to mathematics is different from the standard ways of teaching in our discipline, and it required some thought as far as assessment was concerned. I now use writing as an assessment tool. The students seem to be more comfortable with this type of test, and I like it because it encourages students to share their ideas clearly and efficiently. I find that short essay questions stimulate deeper thought, and hence deeper understanding. Another feature of the course is the use of creative projects. The students have to, for instance, create their own tessellation. These projects allow the students to actually apply what they have learned. They have to write a short reflective paper to explain the math behind the project. This really changes the way the students engage the material, and they all say they really enjoy this aspect of the course.

This month, CTE is inaugurating a series of quick start technology sessions. The series, Technology Tips for Teaching, will provide basic information on how to use a particular technology application along with discussions

on ways to incorporate the application into teaching. Sessions in October will focus on PowerPoint, while sessions in November will introduce Microsoft World Annotation Tools. Each introductory session will be followed later in the month by an open lab session when participants can practice what they learned in the first session and ask questions about the technology. These sessions are intended to be introductory in nature. Those wishing more in-depth sessions should check the calendar on [www.slu.edu/edtech](http://www.slu.edu/edtech) to locate dates and times for sessions offered by ITS. The schedule of sessions along with registration information can be found on the CTE website, [www.slu.edu/centers/cte](http://www.slu.edu/centers/cte). We welcome suggestions on applications you would like included in future sessions.

## The Technology Corner

by Dr. Mary Stephen,  
Assistant Director and  
Coordinator of  
Technology and Learning



## CTE Hosts Faculty Brown Bag Lunch Discussion in Wake of September 11 Tragedy

On Friday, September 21st, the Reinert Center for Teaching Excellence responded to the events of September 11 by holding a Faculty Brown Bag Luncheon to discuss classroom experiences and other issues in teaching after the terrorist attack. The center has collected several articles related to this topic to serve as resources for faculty and TA's. A good resource on the web is through the ERIC website, "Teaching Students About Terrorism and Related Resources, from the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)":

<http://ericir.syr.edu/cgi-bin/printresponses.cgi/Virtual/Qa/archives/Subjects/>

**"60 Minutes: Technology in an Hour"** participants from left to right: Pam DeVoe, Mamoun Benmamoun(rear), and Claudia DuVall. The series continues through mid-November.

For more information visit <http://sixtyminutes.slu.edu>.



Find us and this newsletter on the Web at <http://www.slu.edu/centers/cte/> or call (314)977-3944

CTE Notebook Designed and Published by the Reinert Center for Teaching Excellence staff.

## W e l c o m e !

We welcome Ron Weed, who joined us in September as a new graduate assistant in the Reinert Center for Teaching Excellence. Ron is a Ph.D. student from the Philosophy Department.



Ron Weed



**SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY**  
Paul C. Reinert Center for Teaching Excellence  
Verhaegen Hall, Room 314  
3634 Lindell Blvd  
St. Louis, MO 63108

## The Reinert Center for Teaching Excellence *Ellen Harshman, Director*

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Reinert Center for Teaching Excellence

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**Patrick Welch**  
Economics

**Kathleen Wright**  
Public Health

## Effective Teaching Seminar Schedule—Fall 2001

October 30 & November 2  
1:30 p.m., Verhaegen 219

The Long & Winding Road: How We Got  
to Where We Are in Higher Education

Paul Shore, Educational Studies

November 5  
Ringenberg Lecture Hall  
Dreilling-Marshall Hall, HSC

Enhancing Lectures and Presentations  
Using PowerPoint

Laura Steutzer, MS, PA-C  
Physician Assistant Education  
Mary Stephen, Reinert CTE

November 13 & 16  
1:30 p.m., Verhaegen 212

Technological Solutions to Age Old  
Teaching Problems

Mary Stephen, Reinert CTE

December 3  
School of Allied Health Bldg., Room 0026, HSC

Structuring the Learning Environment

Ann Hayes, MHS, PT, OCS,  
Physical Therapy

### Other Important Dates:

December 7  
3:00 p.m., Verhaegen 119

Holiday Celebration & Certificate Ceremony

Please refer to our website at <http://www.slu.edu/centers/cte> for exact times and locations.

### Notes from the Steering Committee and Sub-Committees

**Assessment Committee:**  
Chair, Dr. Julie Weissman,  
Office of Institutional Study

The committee has been discussing programs for classroom assessment techniques. The University received feedback from the Hewlett Foundation after submission of the report on the first year's operation of the activities they funded. The Foundation commented that they were pleased that the results of the first year's activities exceeded expectations. Assessment of the SLU2000 courses will continue during the second year of funding from Hewlett.

**Mentoring Committee:**  
Chair, Dr. Jim Korn, Psychology

This committee wants to present services to faculty as helpful colleagues. The committee and Center will sponsor opportunities for developing mentoring relationships at upcoming social functions. In addition, there was a session in October for new faculty relating to and discussing issues regarding balancing teaching, research and service expectations of faculty.

**The Research & Grants  
Committee:**  
Chair, Dr. Doris Rubio,  
Research Methodology

The current focus of this committee has been on evaluating the effectiveness of the teaching portfolio retreat that the Center for Teaching Excellence holds each year. Almost 50 faculty have participated in this retreat since it was first offered in 1998. The committee is surveying about half of the participants by conducting telephone interviews. We are hoping to complete this evaluation of the portfolio retreat by November, so the results of the study will be forthcoming.

**Technology Committee:**  
Chair, Dr. Mary Stephen,  
Reinert CTE

The technology mentors on our committee, Teresa Johnson, J.J. Mueller and Laura Steutzer, are hoping to develop a procedure that will encourage more people to utilize their services. The Edtech website, [www.slu.edu/edtech](http://www.slu.edu/edtech) is up and running and devoted to technology and teaching. Please visit the site. If you have any questions or suggestions, please feel free to contact us at 977-2197 or [stephen@slu.edu](mailto:stephen@slu.edu).

**Program Committee:**  
Chair, Dr. Steve Wernet,  
School of Social Service

New developments discussed by the program committee include a separate certificate program for faculty in the future. The offerings for this year are planned around five core areas: professional identity, learning styles, communication, technology and assessment. These areas will be addressed in both overview and specialty sessions with times and locations designed to address the needs of faculty and grad students, both on Frost and Health Sciences Campuses.

**ANNOUNCING**  
CTE Website Administrator,  
Chris Crain

Thanks to Chris, CTE graduate assistant, our new and improved website has the latest, most up-to-date information of upcoming Center events. Please visit our site at its new address: [www.slu.edu/centers/cte](http://www.slu.edu/centers/cte). A link to redirect you from our old site address has been established. If you have any suggestions for Chris, please send a message to: [craintc@slu.edu](mailto:craintc@slu.edu)

## WebCT Training

Co-sponsored by ITS & Reinert Center for Teaching Excellence

Preparing Content and Using the File Manager	Wednesday, October 31 Thursday, November 1	10-11:30am 11-12:30pm	<b>Location:</b> Technology and Learning Lab Verhaegen 212
Customizing Pages & Adding Single Pages, Tool Pages, & URLs	Wednesday, November 7 Thursday, November 8	10-11:30am 11-12:30pm	
Using Communication Tools: Bulletin, Mail, Chat, Calendar	Wednesday, November 14 Thursday, November 15	10-11:30am 11-12:30pm	<b>To Register:</b> E-mail Richard Long at longr@slu.edu
Using the Quiz Tool and Administering the Course	Wednesday, November 28 Thursday, November 29	10-11:30am 11-12:30pm	

## Faculty Winter Technology Institute Technology and Teaching: Sharing Our Stories

Plan NOW to attend the Faculty Winter Technology Institute!

January 9, 2002—Anheuser Busch Auditorium, Cook Hall

- ▶ Morning Sessions will include faculty from the Medical School, Arts & Sciences, College of Public Service, and other colleges and schools.
- ▶ Afternoon sessions will offer a preview of WebCT 3.7

Lunch will be provided to those who pre-register. Watch Newslink for information on how to register and for a copy of the official program schedule.

January 10, 2001—Hands-on Workshops

### Helpful Links on Pedagogy

#### Tomorrow's Professor

<http://sll.stanford.edu/projects/tomprof/newtomprof/postings.html>  
(This is a listserv with excellent archives. Each item is a chapter in a book or an interview on teaching. Subscribing to this listserv will not overwhelm your email account.)

#### How to Find Out More About College Teaching and Its Scholarship

<http://php.indiana.edu/~nelson1/TCHNGBKS.html>

#### Teaching Tips Index

<http://www.hcc.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/teachtip.htm>

#### Tools for Teaching

<http://uga.berkeley.edu/sled/bgd/teaching.html>

#### Diversity/Inclusive Teaching Tips

<http://www.indiana.edu/~icy/diversity/tips.html>

#### Teaching Strategies

<http://ublib.buffalo.edu/libraries/projects/tlr/teachstrat.html>

#### Talking About the September 11 Tragedy in Your Class

<http://depts.washington.edu/cidrweb/index.html>



**60 Minutes:  
Technology in an  
Hour**

#### How I Use Technology in My Teaching

October 31, 2001, 12-1:00pm

Verhaegen 212, Frost Campus

November 1, 8-9:00am

Allied Health Computer Lab, HSC

#### E-Res: Pius Library's New Electronic Reserve System

November 14, 2001, 12-1:00pm

Verhaegen 212, Frost Campus

#### E-Journals in Health Sciences

November 15, 2001, 8-9:00am

Allied Health Computer Lab, HSC

Visit <http://sixtyminutes.slu.edu> to register