

# ACE IT!

## Quality Enhancement Plan: The ACES Project

### ACE IT! NEWSLETTER

The Newsletter for Lamar's Quality Enhancement Plan:  
Active & Collaborative Engagement for Students



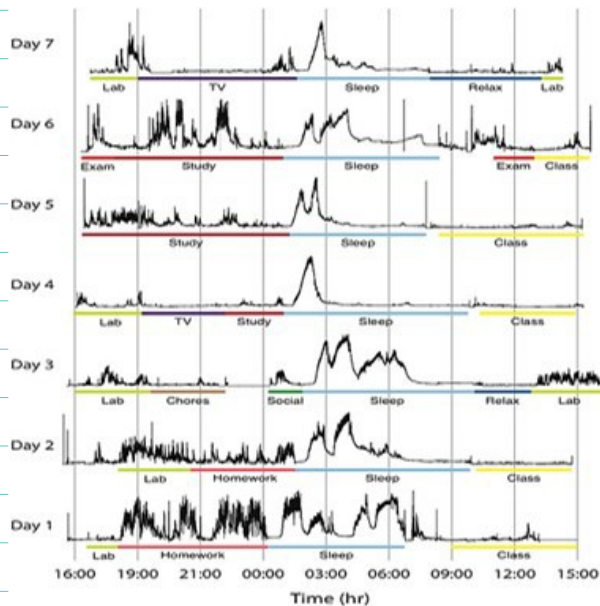
April/May 2013

Volume 1, Issue 5

### What Happens (or doesn't) When We Lecture?

It is no secret that today's students, raised on technology and nourished by social media, find the traditional classroom lecture difficult to sit through attentively. If students prefer texting to email because email takes too long to access and read<sup>1</sup>, imagine how they perceive a 50- or 75-minute lecture. At this point, you may be thinking, *That's their problem. I'm giving them the information they need to know to pass the course. If they want to pass, they'll pay attention.* All true. However, it's not just about discipline. It's also about biology.

The trend toward active and collaborative learning in higher education is supported by substantial research that proves such activities result in *better and deeper learning*. The same has not been proven for the lecture model. In fact, the reverse has been proven<sup>2</sup>. The chart below shows brainwave activity during several daily activities. Notice that the brain is more active during sleep than during a lecture-based class.



Source: "A Wearable Sensor for Unobtrusive, Long-term Assessment of Electrodermal Activity."

DOI 10.1109/TBME.2009.2038487

### End-of-Course Evaluations: Making Sense of Student Comments

At most colleges, courses are starting to wind down and that means it's course evaluation time. It's an activity not always eagerly anticipated by faculty, largely because of those ambiguous comments students write. Just what are they trying to say?

I think part of the reason for the vague feedback is that students don't believe that the evaluations are taken all that seriously, not to mention they're in the middle of the usual end-of-semester stress caused by having lots of big assignments due and final exams to face. It's just not the best time to be asking for feedback and so students dash off a few comments which instructors are left to decipher.

In most end-of-course evaluations, students tend to comment about some of the same aspects of instruction. They frequently address issues of organization, whether students were treated fairly and the challenging aspects of the course. Carol Lauer wondered if faculty and students defined some of these common terms similarly and so she asked a faculty and student cohort to say what they meant when they saw or used the term on course evaluations.

Would you be surprised to learn that faculty and students define the terms differently, or that students themselves don't agree on definitions? Probably not, I'm thinking. Even so, some of the specifics are interesting. Take "not organized," for example. Almost a third of the faculty think students use that term when the teacher changes or doesn't follow the syllabus. Just over 11% of students said that's what the term meant to them. Seventeen percent of the students equated it with the instructor not being prepared, 15% said they used it when the teacher had no apparent plan for the day and almost 13% equated it with getting student work graded and returned slowly.

"Not fair" refers to problematic grading according to almost 50% of the faculty surveyed, but to just over 2% of the students. To students "not fair" gets written on an evaluation when the teacher plays favorites and doesn't treat all students the same way. Students and faculty are closer in their understanding of what "challenging" means when it's applied to a course. It means hard work and lots of it.

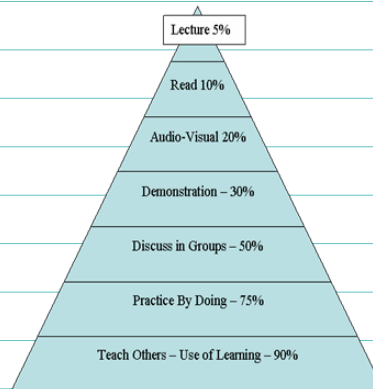
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**“I hear and I forget,  
I see and I remember,  
I do and I understand.”**  
An Old Chinese Proverb

Continued (from Page 1): **What Happens (or doesn't) When We Lecture?**

With content so easily accessible via print and electronic media, lecture has certainly outlived its usefulness as the primary mode of teaching. I stress the qualifier *primary* because some amount of lecture is necessary in order to explain concepts, theories, etc. However, considering the research (the above chart included), it is pedagogically and professionally responsible to question the effectiveness of lecture as a *primary* method of teaching. The chart below provides alternative methods and their positive impact on learning.



Source: [brainbasedbusiness.com/2007/04/better\\_to\\_teach\\_a\\_dog\\_than\\_lis.html](http://brainbasedbusiness.com/2007/04/better_to_teach_a_dog_than_lis.html)

So who does benefit from lecture? We do. According to Dr. Ellen Weber, “teachers retain 90% more through the process of lecturing.” This makes sense, since lecturers are the most active participants in a lecture. Our passive audience, on the other hand, suffers. So what should we do? There’s no need to completely abandon lecture. However, we can engage our students *and their brains* by implementing the active lecture method, in which active and collaborative activities are incorporated before and during the lecture period. Follow the link to see this in action during a physics class: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IBYrKPoVFwg>

This link will take you to a list of lecture-interrupting activities that are effective *and* efficient:  
[ctl.boisestate.edu/documents/LectureInterruptingActivities.pdf](http://ctl.boisestate.edu/documents/LectureInterruptingActivities.pdf)

For more on the ineffectiveness of long lectures, read  
[brainbasedbusiness.com/2006/10/lectures\\_work\\_against\\_the\\_brai.html](http://brainbasedbusiness.com/2006/10/lectures_work_against_the_brai.html)

*“College is a place where a professor’s lecture notes go straight to the students’ lecture notes, without passing through the brains of either.”*  
(Attributed to Mark Twain)

Happy teaching!

*Melissa Hudler*

1. [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/21/technology/21email.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/21/technology/21email.html?_r=0)
2. <http://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/ocslid/resources/20reasons.html>  
[http://donaldclarkplanb.blogspot.com/2012/01/lectures-selling-students-short\\_22.html](http://donaldclarkplanb.blogspot.com/2012/01/lectures-selling-students-short_22.html)  
<http://www.npr.org/2012/01/01/144550920/physicists-look-to-lose-the-lecture-as-teaching-tool>

## **NEWS & APPLAUSE**

### **ACES Certification Award**

Congratulations to the faculty listed below for receiving the ACES Certification Award. This award is given to those faculty members who have displayed excellence using active and collaborative teaching methods.

**Dr. Jennifer Scarduzio**  
Assistant Professor of Communication

**Mrs. Lynn Carter (ACES Cohort 4)**  
Instructor of College-Readiness Math

**Dr. Julie Wilhelm (ACES Cohort 3)**  
Assistant Professor of English

**Dr. Amy C. Smith (ACES Cohort 3)**  
Assistant Professor of English

### **2013-14 ACES Fellows Announced**

**Dr. José Andino**  
Instructor of Chemistry

**Mrs. Theresa Storey Hefner-Babb**  
Instructor of Library Skills

**Dr. Mark Mengerink**  
Assistant Professor of History

**Dr. Yasuko Sato**  
Assistant Professor of History

**Ms. Megan Young**  
Assistant Professor of Art

***Welcome, ACES Cohort 5!***

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## Toolbox for Building a Winning Hand

[Teaching Naked: How Moving Technology Out of Your College Classroom Will Improve Student Learning](#)  
By: [Dr. José Antonio Bowen](#)

Introducing a new way to think about higher education, learning, and technology that prioritizes the benefits of the human dimension. José Bowen recognizes that technology is profoundly changing education and that if students are going to continue to pay enormous sums for campus classes, colleges will need to provide more than what can be found online and maximize “naked” face-to-face contact with faculty. Here, he illustrates how technology is most powerfully used outside the classroom, and, when used effectively, how it can ensure that students arrive to class more prepared for meaningful interaction with faculty. Bowen offers practical advice for faculty and administrators on how to engage students with new technology while restructuring classes into more active learning environments.

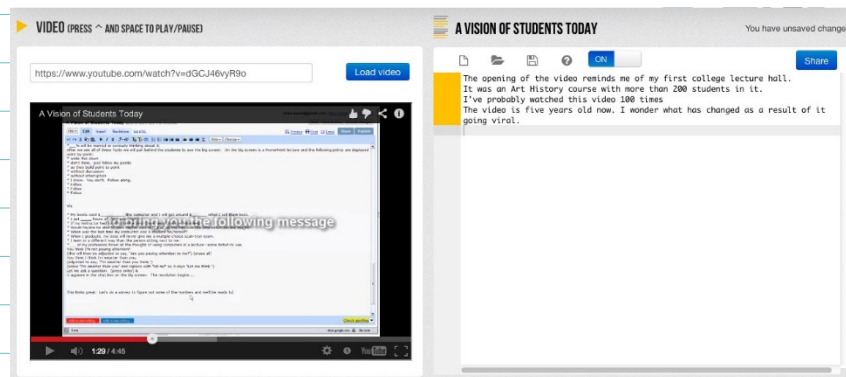


Dr. José Bowen is the Dean of the Meadows School for the Arts at SMU. Click on the picture (left) to view the TEDx event where Dean Bowen presents ideas and theories from his book entitled “*Teaching Naked*.”

Click picture to play TEDx video.

### **VideoNotes—A Great Tool for Taking Notes While Watching Academic Videos**

VideoNotes is a free and handy new tool for taking notes while watching videos. VideoNotes allows you to load any video on the left side of your screen (just paste in the video URL) and take notes on the right side. VideoNotes is integrated with your Google Drive account. By integrating with Google Drive, VideoNotes allows you to share your notes and collaborate just as you can with a Google Document. When you click on previous notes you’ve made, the video will jump to that point, allowing for easy navigation.



<http://www.freetech4teachers.com/2013/04/video-notes-great-tool-for-taking-notes.html#.UYQCqJaUyE>

# End-of-Course Evaluations: Making Sense of Student Comments

By: Maryellen Weimer, Ph.D. in Teaching Professor Blog

Continued (from Page 1)

The point here isn't terribly profound but it merits a reminder, especially at the end of courses when teachers are tired. Many of the terms used to describe teaching on rating forms and in student comments are abstractions. "Organized" is something teachers are and deciding whether a teacher is or isn't depends on what the teacher does. Various behaviors, actions and inaction can be what any given individual sees as the presence or absence organization.

There is good news here. If you're interested in improving something like organization, if you define it behaviorally, you can change what you, do which is a lot easier than changing what you are. Organization has never been one of my strong suits and I didn't make much progress trying to "be" organized. But when I started putting a skeleton outline on the board, when I stopped five minutes before the end of period and used the outline to summarize, when I began class working with students to create a list of points to remember from last class, I was seen by students as being more organized.

But it isn't all good news. A collection of dashed off student comments collected at the end of the semester doesn't easily translate into an action-based improvement agenda. What the student comments mean is probably not what you think they mean. Communication about the impact of teaching policies and practices on efforts to learn needs to be ongoing so there's an opportunity for clarifying feedback, adjustments and then more feedback. We can and should make efforts to change the way our institutions collect student assessments, but, until that glacier melts, we need to take matters into our own hands and solicit a different kind of feedback and at different times during the course.

**Reference:** Lauer, C. (2012). A comparison of faculty and student perspectives on course evaluation terminology. *To Improve the Academy*, 31, 195-211.

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Weimer, Maryellen. (2012, November). End-of-course evaluations: making sense of student comments. *Faculty Focus*.

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## NEWS & APPLAUSE

Continued (from Page 3)

Congratulations to **Dr. Terry Price** (ACES Cohort 4) who was recently honored at the Teacher Appreciation Softball Game.

This has been an incredibly successful semester for our own **Dr. Amy C. Smith**! In addition to receiving an **ACES Certification Award**, Dr. Smith was also honored with a **2013 Lamar University Merit Award** as well as earning an **Academic Partnership Grant**.

### 2013 Lamar University Merit Award

This award is given in recognition of outstanding performance in the classroom. A university-wide committee selected the recipients from junior faculty members nominated by committees from LU Colleges.

### Academic Partnership 2013 Grant

Dr. Smith's project proposal is entitled,  
*"Effects of cooperative writing activities in small learning teams on retention, peer response, and philosophical argumentation in a large online course."*  
 She has been awarded a grant of \$7,668.00.

# CTLE

 Center for Teaching and Learning Enhancement

## **BLASTOFF 2013** Tuesday, August 20th

### Call for Proposals

Email your proposals for BLASTOFF 2013  
to Dr. Steven Zani at [steven.zani@lamar.edu](mailto:steven.zani@lamar.edu)  
by June 10th, 2013.

 The Quality Enhancement Plan and the Center for Teaching and Learning Enhancement offices are located in the Mary and John Gray Library on the 6th floor.

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