Project Pedagogy: Ideas for Better Teaching

Some Instructional Resources

by
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Loudoun Campus
Northern Virginia Community College

Teaching is more difficult than learning because what teaching calls for is this: to let learn. The real teacher, in fact, lets nothing else be learned than learning. His conduct, therefore, often produces the impression that we properly learn nothing from him, if by "learning" we now suddenly understand merely the procurement of useful information.

Martin Heidegger

PREFACE

"Whenever approaching an unfamiliar object—for example a new refrigerator or a personal computer—I have found manuals useful and comforting." With these words, Henry Rosovsky introduces his book *The University: An Owner's Manual*. In *Ideas for Better Teaching*, a welcome but unanticipated outcome of Northern Virginia Community College-Loudoun Campus's Project Pedagogy, authors Charles Evans and Jennifer Lerner provide their colleagues among the full-time and adjunct teaching faculty with a wonderful resource for college teachers both unfamiliar with and long-ago initiated to their noble calling. Few who pick up this manual will find its subject completely novel, yet I daresay all who do so will come away with a new idea, confirmation of something they already do in the classroom, and a renewed sense of the importance of their craft. Readers who discover as little as one new tactic will have completely vindicated and rewarded the authors. And I know from having read critical reviews given to Evans and Lerner by colleagues with up to forty years in the classroom that even the most experienced and distinguished instructors will profit from this manual as they constantly seek new ways to engage their students and their subject matter. Speaking personally, I must say that *Ideas for Better Teaching* has already become my 'default' choice both for teaching tips and for systematic advice about course and syllabus design. In my role as a dean, I feel very parental toward our campus's Project Pedagogy, and now feel equally proud of the first edition of the fine manual you hold in your hand.

Beverly Blois
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INTRODUCING THE AUTHORS AND PROJECT PEDAGOGY

This book has grown out of a two-year pilot project at the Loudoun campus of Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC) aiming to provide pedagogical training to newly-hired full-time faculty. As faculty members who also work closely with adjunct instructors, we were both interested in helping to give our adjunct instructors access to the same pedagogical advice and additional resources as well.

All of our faculty come to NVCC with a passion for their subjects and a desire to share that passion with their students. However, as many adjunct instructors have full-time jobs, family commitments, and other responsibilities, it is often difficult for them to communicate with colleagues about their teaching, share teaching ideas, get feedback on what they are doing in the classroom, or find tips on improving their teaching or adding new teaching techniques to their repertoires. We hope that this book and its companion website, www.nvcc.edu/loudoun/pp/pedagogy.html, will provide both full-time and adjunct instructors with a way to easily access some teaching ideas and thus help to improve their classroom experiences and those of their students.

In the book, you will find tips on a range of teaching issues, from course design to lecturing to dealing with disruptive students. We have also suggested additional resources for further reading on many topics. In the last part of the book, you will find a detailed list of campus and college resources to help you navigate all of the organizational details of teaching at NVCC, from how to use library resources or the campus testing center to where to find dry erase markers for your classroom whiteboard. At the book's companion website (www.nvcc.edu/loudoun/PP/Pedagogy.html), you will find web links to some of this material as well as other online teaching resources.

The handbook is not meant to be directed at instructors of only sociology and history, or only instructors in the humanities. While there are some necessary differences between teaching fire science and Western civilization, between teaching horticulture and sociology, between teaching technology and poetry, there are also many commonalities in the best practices of teaching. Even though some may be skeptical, there is no reason why history instructors, for example, can't learn something about successful teaching from computer science instructors, and vice versa. Small group activities and short writing exercises, for example, can be used in technology or lab courses just as effectively as in history or sociology courses. The technique will always be a little different in each discipline, but most effective teaching tools are widely applicable throughout higher education.

We hope that whatever your field, you will find some of these tips useful and will be able to use them in your teaching, whether you use them as we have described them here, alter them to better fit the particular needs of your discipline and your course, or use them as inspiration for creating your own techniques. We consider our work to be a work in progress and invite commentary, suggestions, teaching tips or hints from anybody. You can contact Charlie at cevans@nvcc.edu, 703.450.2520, or in his office in room LR 308, and Jennifer at jlerner@nvcc.edu, 703.450.2514, or in her office in room LR 312.

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About the Authors

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Jennifer Lerner, www.nvcc.edu/home/jlerner/, is Assistant Professor of Sociology at the Loudoun campus of NVCC. She holds a B.A. in Sociology from the University of Virginia and an M.A. in Sociology from the University of Michigan and is currently finishing her Ph.D. from Michigan, completing dissertation research on how college students respond to course material on race, class, and gender inequalities. She has work published or forthcoming in *The Sociological Quarterly*, *Teaching Sociology*, *Professing Humanist Sociology*, *The Journal of College Student Development*, and *Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Higher Education for the Public Good*.

PART I
PREPARING TO TEACH

In this section of the handbook, we address the process of getting your course ready for you to teach, which means thinking about the broader goals of the course (Designing the Course), planning the day-to-day activities and conveying some required information to students (Developing a Great Syllabus), and getting ready for the first day (Planning the First Day of Class). With this foundation in place, you will be on track for a smooth start to the semester.

CHAPTER 1
DESIGNING YOUR COURSE

The first step in planning your teaching for the semester is to design your course. Before you can get into the specifics of reading schedules, assignments, and exams, you need to think more broadly about course goals and overall content. Your answers to these broader questions should govern the specifics you cover in the course and how you will cover them. Some points to consider:

- Course Content Summaries: NVCC instructors in each discipline have defined the basic content to be covered in each course in that discipline. These course content summaries include general course objectives as well as major and optional topics to be covered. You can access these summaries at www.nvcc.edu/ces/coursesummaries.htm. You should also speak with your discipline coordinator to ask whether the department abides strictly by the course content summaries, what deviations (if any) are permissible, and whether there are any changes you should know about as you plan your course.

- Once you have these required course elements in mind, think more broadly about what you want to include/cover. What do you feel is important in your course and discipline, and how can you best get that across to your students? Further, what types of skills do you want students to work on in your course (for example, do you want them to improve their writing? Critical thinking skills? Library research abilities? Computation skills? Technology know-how?)? How can you design course activities to ensure that they gain those skills?

- After determining what content and types of exercises you want to include in your course, work on determining the practicalities. How will you sequence the topics? How will you sequence different skills? (In this regard, take a moment to look at Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, www.nwlink.com/~donclark/hrd/bloom.html. It might help you in planning your exercises.) How much work will you assign and at what pace, keeping in mind that you want to challenge students while also being reasonable about how much work you expect them to complete? (Think as well about how much grading you are creating for yourself and on what schedule, and whether you are setting up reasonable expectations on your end.) It's at this stage that you will have to make hard decisions about the goals you came up with earlier; some goals may have to be sacrificed or restricted due to time constraints. It is better to omit some potential content or activities in order to fully develop the lessons you do include than to try to squeeze everything in and force yourself (and your students) to rush through.

- Think about how you want your class sessions to run. Will you be lecturing most of the time? Do you hope to engage students in discussions of the reading material? Do you want students to work on practice problems before coming to class? Would you prefer that they worked on problems in class? Do you want students to come to class prepared with questions about the day's reading or about the material from last class? Based on your plans for class sessions, think about how you can structure course assignments to make your intended outcome more likely. Without some concrete incentives, most students will not come to class prepared. To be sure that students come to class ready in whatever way you want them prepared, consider including course features like:

    a) Pop quizzes/random homework checks: Tell students that a certain portion of their final grade will come from pop quizzes on the reading or random homework checks. You can specify a certain number of these checks or just make the general point that there will be an undetermined number of quizzes/checks. If you do specify the number so students have a better sense of how much each quiz/check will count in their final grade, don't be too specific or they'll stop preparing once they know the last quiz is past. To avoid this problem, for example, you could say that there will be four or five pop quizzes.

    b) Reading responses/journal entries: A more labor-intensive (for both students and faculty) approach to making students do the reading is to require written responses. You could require a response to every reading (this works well in a course that meets only once a week) or allow students to choose a certain number of readings to respond to over the course of the semester. If you use reading responses in your course, be sure to be specific about what type of response you are looking for—summary? Analysis? Personal reflection? You will need to give students guidelines on how to do these responses; most will not know what you mean, for example, if you simply ask for an analytical response to a text.

    c) Discussion questions: A quick way to get some student involvement is to require each student to come to class with a certain number of discussion questions about the reading assignment. Again, you'll need to give them guidance on what sorts of questions you are looking for, and tell them in advance what you'll do with them. (For example, students should know whether they'll be forced to read their questions aloud to the class.) You can simply collect the questions for a grade (every time, or periodically and unannounced, like a homework check). Or, you can go further and use the questions to guide discussion. You might ask for volunteers to share one of their questions and then let the class answer each one, or you might collect all the papers at the beginning of the discussion and choose some to read yourself. (If you are not going to collect the questions until the end of the discussion, you may want to require that they be typed so that students who weren't prepared can't scribble down versions of other students' questions while you discuss.)

Some Additional Online Resources on Course Design

- Barbara Gross Davis, *Tools for Teaching*, "Preparing or Revising a Course" (teaching.berkeley.edu/bgd/prepare.html). Some of this information (for example, choosing course readings) may not be relevant to you, but Davis has some useful points about how to think about course objectives and translate them into the concrete details of your course. This page also includes some tips about creating your syllabus; see Chapter 2 of this book for more detail on writing syllabi.

CHAPTER 2
DEVELOPING A GREAT SYLLABUS

NVCC has some specific syllabus requirements. (These come from the faculty handbook, www.nvcc.edu/resources/fachandbook/faculty2004-05.pdf . We do not suggest that you try to access this large file unless you are on a high-speed connection.)

Remember that each student should receive a syllabus at the beginning of the course, and the syllabus must be reviewed with students. (See Chapter 3 for ideas about how to present the syllabus on the first day of class.)

Your syllabus must include the following:

- Course number and title (simple enough).

- Instructor's name, contact phone number (this can be the division phone number or your home, if you are willing; you can also have voice mail set up for you so that any messages left by students are forwarded to your email—see Chapter 19), e-mail address (every adjunct gets an official college email address; you can use your own if you prefer), and office hours (usually some time period before or after your class meetings; don't forget to include "and by appointment" as part of your office hours).

- Objectives that students are expected to achieve upon successful completion of the course. (You can get these from the official course content summaries, www.nvcc.edu/ces/coursesummaries.htm, and add your own.) These do not have to be complicated.

- Any prerequisites and/or a suggested level of preparation expected of students to enable them to succeed in the course. For example, on the syllabi for Charlie's history survey courses, he usually includes a statement about the writing requirements in his courses. You can find other examples of such statements in the Loudoun campus faculty syllabi listed below.

- Tentative schedule of class meetings, topics and/or assignments. Charlie suggests that you always label your syllabus as "Tentative" in case you need to make changes later.

- Book information for students. Don't forget to explain if there are alternative books or editions that will be acceptable in the course. If a specific edition of a text is necessary, it is useful to provide the ISBN number to assist students who order books online.

- Student responsibilities, including assignments, and other requirements of the course.

- Statement of how grades will be determined. You should include specific point values or assignment weights and the overall course grading scale. NVCC does not have an official standard for the grading scale, but most faculty use the basic 90-100 = A, 80-89.9 = B, etc. Note that NVCC issues only the basic letter grades, not pluses and minuses. Be as specific and precise as possible with your grades and point values on your syllabus.

- Attendance policy. Remember, per college requirements, you must take attendance for the first three weeks of your class. Beyond that requirement, it is up to you to decide whether you will take attendance all semester and whether you will make attendance, absences, and/or tardiness a portion of the course grade.

- Statement about disabilities or accommodation, such as "Any student who thinks that he/she may need an accommodation based on a disability, should make an appointment to see a Counselor for Disability Services." Again, take a look at the sample syllabi listed below for various ways of wording this statement. Some faculty use a more legalistic statement, while others lengthen it a bit and try to make it more welcoming to students who will need these accommodations. (See Chapter 20 for more information on disability accommodations.)

Once you have addressed the basics listed above, you can consider other elements to include in your syllabus. While these elements are not required, thinking them out ahead of time and including them in writing on your syllabus may save you some headaches later in the semester.

Your syllabus should probably also include:

- Late work policy: Which assignments will be accepted late, and which will not? How will grades be penalized if assignments are turned in late?

- Makeup exam policy: Will there be makeup exams/quizzes available if students miss an exam? Under what circumstances will a student be allowed to take a makeup exam? (For example, do they need to have received permission from you before the original exam occurred? Do they need to provide documentation of an emergency?)

- How to submit assignments: Will you accept assignments submitted by email (and if so, do you have any requirements about attachments, subject line content, etc.)? Assignments submitted to your mailbox in the division office? Or only assignments turned in at class meetings?

- You may want to include an opening statement to try to get students excited about the course. Syllabi often seem like dry lists of rules and regulations. Consider including a few sentences at the beginning of your syllabus, before you get into the nitty-gritty of textbooks and grading, to convey at least a bit of your passion and excitement about the

subject matter. Maybe describe what is important, interesting, and relevant about your discipline, or include an epigraph or two to pique students' interest.

- Many community college students have weak study skills and little sense of how to succeed in college courses. Consider including on your syllabus some tips and resources that might help them develop these skills. For example, you might include a section with tips on how to do the reading, how to write successful papers in your course, how to prepare for each class session, what to expect from your teaching style, etc. You might also list some additional resources students might find useful, such as information on our campus Writing Center, the Math Lab, and the Counseling Center. (See Chapter 20 for more information on these resources.)

- Unfortunately, if your course includes writing you will likely deal with plagiarism at some point (see Chapter 9). Include a statement on your syllabus pointing this issue out to students, reminding them of its importance, and perhaps directing them to some online resources that explain plagiarism. Further, think ahead about what penalty you will impose if you find a student plagiarizing, and include this in your syllabus as well so that you do not have to work it out on the spot if the situation does arise. You may also want to mention other forms of academic dishonesty, such as cheating on exams.

One additional issue to consider as you create your syllabus and plan for the first day of class is how to present your syllabus to your students. Should you give each student a paper syllabus or post the syllabus online (or both)? There are pros and cons to each approach.

Cons of an Online Syllabus

- You need some technical know-how to put materials on the web. (However, you don't have to be a pro with, or master, the tech stuff to do this, and the IT staff at the campus can help you.)
- The reliability of the web server, which can go down at any time. (However, the servers are probably more reliable than the office copy machine, and at least if they go down, help is usually on the way pretty quickly.)
- Student access—students need to be able to access the web. (However, students have plenty of campus, community, and home computers for internet access. It could be better, but it's not bad.)
- Links change and websites disappear, so you must keep checking and updating the syllabus after you have posted it.

Pros of an Online Syllabus

- Hyperlinks allow access to materials as needed.
- A simple website can really be used to organize a lot of material through links (just look at the enormous amount of material you can access from one of the resource sites below).
- Saves trees (no paper needs to be used when material is on the web).
- Saves the college money (no copying costs).
- Ease of revising and distributing syllabus and other materials via the web.

- Develops/improves students' technical capabilities.
- Students can access course schedule and instructions from anywhere, even if they do not have their class notebook or other materials on hand.

Cons of a Printed Handout

- When students lose their syllabus, they can't get another without contacting you, which causes delays for them and hassles for you.
- Uses more paper and other college resources than an online syllabus.
- If you need to make changes due to a snow cancellation or other problem, you have to give students a separate handout which they may or may not successfully keep with their original syllabus. If they don't keep the documents together, you may end up with confusion.

Pros of a Printed Handout

- Gives all students equal access—whether or not students are comfortable with computers, and whether or not students have web access at home, they will be equally able to use the course syllabus.
- Gives students something tangible to examine and take with them and on the first day of class.

A final option is to combine these approaches: give students a printed syllabus on the first day of class, but also post your syllabus online so students can access it anywhere. You can easily post changes online, and most students will get more practice with their computer skills, while those without easy computer access will not be placed at a disadvantage. This combination approach does eliminate some of the benefits of the online syllabus (such as saving resources), but it adds some of the benefits of the paper syllabus.

Sample Syllabi from Loudoun Faculty

A great way to get ideas for your syllabus (language to include, ideas for class policies, different formatting styles, etc.) is to look at what other faculty are doing. You might also look at these syllabi to help you get a sense of the appropriate workload in various disciplines. Here are a few samples from faculty who have posed their syllabi online. Some of these are more complicated that others, and some are a bit better designed than others, but they all include the basic content you might want to compare to your own syllabus.

- Kevin Chouinard (MTH 151, www.nvcc.edu/home/kchouinard/MTH151.htm)
- Charlie Evans (HIS 101, novaonline.nvcc.edu/eli/evans/campus/His101/Syllabus.html)
- Marv Glick (BIO, his home page links to his syllabi which are Word documents, www.nvcc.edu/home/nvglicm/)
- Jennifer Lerner (SOC 202, www.nvcc.edu/home/jlerner/soc202.html)
- Nathan Leslie (ENG 212, www.nvcc.edu/home/nleslie/english_212.htm)
- David Porter (HIS 121, www.nvcc.edu/home/dporter/His121/default.htm)
- Jane Serbousek (MTH 163, www.nvcc.edu/home/jserbousek/M163sylspring2005.htm)

Some Additional Online Resources on Syllabi

- Barbara Gross Davis, *Tools for Teaching*, "Creating a Syllabus" (teaching.berkeley.edu/bgd/syllabus.html). This chapter briefly covers many of the points we made above and adds some other things you might want to consider as you write your syllabus.

- University of Minnesota Syllabus Tutorial (www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/syllabus/index.html). This elaborate site may be useful to you if you have little experience writing a syllabus, want to try something new, and have a little bit of time to devote to going through all the steps they suggest. It is especially useful in giving examples of how different parts of a syllabus might look, so it's a good place to go (in addition to the Loudoun faculty syllabi listed above) if you're stuck on how to write a certain part of your syllabus.

CHAPTER 3
PREPARING FOR THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS

The first day of class is very important because it is your chance to make a first impression on your students and to get them excited about the class. The first day is also a difficult one because both you and your students are likely to be anxious. Here are some ways to make the best of this important day.

Jennifer's Suggestions

- Make good use of the class session. If you have students come in, get the syllabus, and leave after fifteen minutes, you have communicated to them that time is not precious in this class, and you have let them leave without getting them excited and motivated to get started on the course. Besides going over the syllabus, gathering student information (see below), and perhaps using an icebreaker (see below), begin the course material in some way. You might offer a brief lecture on important course themes the students should watch for, or use a short video clip or newspaper article and discuss it.

- To deal with your nervousness on the first day, try arriving a bit early so that you can get all your materials set up, and then begin chatting with the students as they arrive. This will get you warmed up and will make the faces seem friendlier as you being talking to the whole class a few minutes later. What I like to do for this purpose is to take attendance by circulating among the students (rather than waiting to read the roll in front of the whole class). This allows me to avoid embarrassing name mispronunciations (since each student tells me her/his name and then I find it on the roster), lets me say a personal hello and welcome to many of the students, and avoids that boring class time when the teacher is taking roll and the students look around in a daze waiting for their names to be called. Just be sure that you pause later to get the latecomers down on the roll as well.

- Rather than beginning class with the syllabus (which suggests that the syllabus is what's important), try beginning with something to get students interested in your subject matter and help them start to see why it is important. In some of my classes, I read aloud short, engaging excerpts from several books to give students a flavor for the kinds of things we'll be looking at. Or, give them some examples of how your subject matter shows up in the news or popular press. For example, on the first day of my criminology class, I generally read students a list of all the *Washington Post* headlines and all the prime-time TV shows from the previous day that have to do with crime, and use this to discuss how

important crime and law are to the American public. Such an opening only takes a few minutes, but starts the class off with an intellectual, rather than a business-like, tone.

- When you introduce yourself, tell students something interesting about you. Many students, especially first-generation college students, will find you intimidating; no matter how nice you think you look. Humanize yourself by sharing something personal. Don't tell them about where you got your degree or what your dissertation was on (or at least, don't leave it at that), because most of them don't care. Tell them about your hobbies, your pets, your family, or what you did this summer.

- When you go over the syllabus, don't waste students' time by reading everything aloud. Use the time to point out the key elements of the syllabus and discuss the most important points (what the books are and where to get them; what the assignments will be; what the major topics will be; how to understand the schedule of readings and assignments; etc.). As you go over the topics and assignments, try to convey why they are interesting or exciting, and to pique students' interest about each component of the course. Again, this first day is all about getting students motivated to get started; a laundry list of assignments and topics the students don't really understand will not do that.

- Emphasize to your students the importance of going home and reading the syllabus in its entirety—often students don't see the syllabus this way and don't bother reading it until it's too late.

- Consider gathering some student information on the first day. You may want to do the standard contact-information-on-index-cards type of information, or you might want to do more. I use an information sheet that asks students basic contact information but also their major, how long they've been at NOVA, and several more specific questions about the course (e.g. why they are taking the course, what sounds most interesting in the course, what they like best and worst about college classes). No matter what combination of specific questions I use, I always include these two: 1) What concerns do you have about the course at this point? and 2) What else should I know about you? By asking students to express their concerns, you learn a lot about the impressions they got from the syllabus and from your demeanor. The chance to express their concerns to you right away will help to alleviate some of the students' anxieties, and you can try to alleviate them even more at the following class with some further comments about the common things students were concerned about. The general "what else should I know about you?" question can also tell you a lot. Many students will use this as an opening to tell you something personal that you'll need to know later (e.g., that they need testing accommodations for a learning disability), to share life challenges they'll be dealing with that semester, or to make some funny remark about their hobbies. Whatever they include, it gives you a first glimpse of each student and of the class overall. You won't be able to remember everything each student wrote, but you'll pick it up over time. I often find myself referring back to these forms as the semester goes on and I get to know the students better; their early comments often give me useful insight on each student and may help me interpret their later actions.

- Consider using an icebreaker exercise on the first day. An icebreaker is an activity designed to involve everyone in starting to get to know each other. These exercises are often a bit (or very) cheesy, but they can get everyone involved and thereby help reduce the anxiety and awkward silences of the first day. Some options:

    a) *Paired Introduction Interviews*: Have students pair with another nearby student who they don't know. Give them some questions to ask each other (name, major, where they work, what they did this summer, etc.) and give everyone 5 minutes to talk. Then have each student introduce the student they "interviewed" to the rest of the class. Make sure to tell them ahead of time that they will have to introduce the other student—otherwise, some may not pay enough attention to what the other student is saying. This exercise helps forge some initial bonds among students but should only be used in smaller classes, as everyone would get bored and lost listening to fifty student introductions. If you want to use the exercise in large classes, skip the whole-class introductions and encourage the pairs to exchange contact information and consider working with each other during the course.

    b) *Student Introductions*: This is the most basic icebreaker. Go around the room and have students state their name and answer one or two other questions about themselves (maybe why they are taking the course and one interesting fact about themselves). This icebreaker takes less time than the paired interviews, but you lose the opportunity to get students talking to each other for a few minutes. Again, don't use this in a large class; no one will be able to pay attention to fifty of these.

    c) *Getting-to-know-you Bingo*: This icebreaker is the one I generally use when I use icebreakers. It's definitely cheesy, but most students have fun with it anyway. Make a four-by-four grid (or whatever size you prefer; like a Bingo board) and in each box, write a statement that might describe a student (for example: has children; works full-time; has taken sociology before; is majoring in business; has traveled abroad; likes snowboarding; etc.). Hand out photocopies of the board and set students loose with the goal of finding a classmate who fits every one of the statements. To do this, students will have to mingle around and start meeting each other. Ask them to have the students they find initial the box that fits them. It will take 10 minutes or so for students to do this exercise, and it's best done in a room with moveable chairs rather than an auditorium-style room, where students have more trouble moving around. The exercise is a good way to reduce everyone's anxiety because they're up and moving around, and they're not all staring at you. I find that after a minute of awkwardness as students get the ball rolling, the class will be full of chatting and laughter and motion, which is a great way to get the semester started.

    d) *Toilet Paper Icebreaker*: This icebreaker is also a bit cheesy, but it can be a fun way to get to know students while also sending them the message that

they have to keep on their toes in your class. Bring a roll of toilet paper to class (it needs to be one that has perforated sheets). Hand the roll around the room and tell students that they should each take one to four sheets of the toilet paper, but that you're not going to tell them why or how to decide how many to take until after they're done. Students will giggle and look at each other as they do this, trying to figure out what you are doing, which is a good way to starting bonding the class together. Once everyone has taken their squares, tell them that the number of squares they took is the number of interesting things they have to tell the class about themselves when they introduce themselves. Then go around the room, as in basic student introductions, and have students share their names and then an interesting fact for each toilet paper square they took.

Charlie's Suggestions

- Jennifer has some great suggestions; I will just add the caution that you do need to be realistic about how much you can really do on the first day of class. After all, it's my first day back too.

- So, I don't expect to get any substantial content covered on the first day. I always intensely disliked teachers who tried to do "anything" on the first day beyond go over the syllabus, and I'm not going to change that attitude now. What Jennifer noted about the importance of class time might be true, but I'm rarely going to use the whole time on the first day. I'd rather send the students off early to get their books (and complain about me and the course requirements). There is a problem with the classes that meet once a week, the 150-minute classes. There you absolutely cannot afford to not use that entire first class, and you are also presented with the problem that your students have no background, no texts, no idea of the course; it is hard to go right into a lecture or covering content. I suggest going through your intro activities, then taking a break so that students can go to the bookstore while they are on campus (if you are off-campus, then you cannot do that). Then you have some time to use. You can show a video and follow with a directed discussion.

- But the first day is important because of the first impression you make on your students, which Jennifer noted above. You want to appear organized, in control, knowledgeable about your material and your syllabus. Arrive early and make sure that you can log onto the computer or are prepared to use any other machines/instruments in your classroom, including the lights. Put stuff on the white board, etc. Be ready to go. Chat with the students who get to class early.

- With regard to the syllabus, I usually give students a one-page handout that has my contact information, required books, college email information and the URL of the course syllabus. I point out a few things about the syllabus and ask students to check out the syllabus in detail before we meet again and come prepared with specific questions about

the course. I often have a surprise quiz on the syllabus at the start of the second class with simple questions such as: How many exams in the course?

- Jennifer's idea of breaking the ice is important. I do take time taking attendance and asking the students questions. Then I do one of two things.
    - I give each student a 3x5 card and ask them to respond to some questions that I ask them. These might be name, why they are in the class, their foreign language capabilities, email address, etc.
    - I give each student a 3x5 card and ask them to write down on the card two questions that they would like to ask me about the course, history, or myself. I collect them and spend some time answering the questions.

Some Additional Online Resources on the First Day of Class

- Barbara Gross Davis, *Tools for Teaching*, "The First Day of Class" (teaching.berkeley.edu/bgd/firstday.html). Davis lists many suggestions for what to prepare before the first day of class to make sure it goes smoothly, how to deal with administrative details like attendance and class policies, and how to start the class off on a positive note.

- Joyce T. Povlacs, "101 Things You Can Do in the First Three Weeks of Class" (honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/101thing.htm). The title here says it all. Povlacs' tips are organized into categories for easier use; she offers ideas for activities that help the students engage in active learning, get students focused on the class, and challenge and support students, among other topics.

- University of Nebraska, Lincoln, "Learning Students' Names" (www.unl.edu/gradstudies/gsapd/instructional/names.shtml). This article lists techniques for learning students' names as well as ideas for icebreaker exercises that help you get to know your students.

PART II
TEACHING TIPS

In this section of the book, we address the process of teaching your course, offering some suggestions on how to choose and prepare the specific activities that you will use in your classroom, including lectures, discussions, group work, and other active learning exercises. We conclude with tips about classroom management.

CHAPTER 4
PREPARING AND DELIVERING LECTURES

Lecturing is a mainstay of college teaching, although not necessarily for the right reasons. Most of us lecture at least some of the time. Here are some suggestions for preparing and delivering lectures that will be as effective as possible.

Preparing Your Lecture

Jennifer's Suggestions

- First, decide whether a lecture is the best teaching tool for the given class. Use lectures when you need to convey a significant amount of material in an orderly fashion, or when you are presenting difficult material and want to be sure to explain it clearly.

- To keep your lecture engaging so that students will stay focused and interested, work on preparing a lecture that will be manageable and easy to listen to. Some ideas on how to do this:
    - Use concrete, interesting examples to illustrate your points (examples from the media, funny stories, interesting facts about the personal lives of the theorists you are studying, etc.).
    - Don't try to cram too much information into one lecture. The material will be best remembered if you stick to three or four main points and offer several illustrations of each.
    - Consider breaking your lecture up into several short segments rather than doing a long lecture straight through. After each 10-15 minute segment, you might take a break for students to compare notes with each other, respond to a think-pair-share task (see Chapter 7), write a summary of the points made so far (then have several students share their summaries aloud before moving on), or ask questions about the points you just made (consider giving everyone time to think about and write down some questions first in order to get more students involved).

- Prepare a visual aide to accompany your lecture, but select and construct this aide carefully. Most students need some form of visual aide to help them focus on the lecture, understand its organization, and take good notes. This might be an outline or other notes you write on the board (before lecturing or as you go), a handout with an "empty outline" for the students to fill in during the lecture, or a PowerPoint presentation. Experiment

with different approaches to see which students seem to like best and which works best for your teaching style. Whatever you choose, make sure that it helps the students rather than distracting them (for example, a well-crafted empty outline can help students take great notes, but a poorly-crafted one can lead to constant interruptions from students asking where you are on the outline). Also be sure that the aide does not distract *you*. Don't fall into the trap of creating detailed PowerPoint presentations and looking at them more than you look at your students.

Charlie's Suggestions

- My first suggestion is not always practicable, but it can really help you. Try to borrow another instructor's lecture notes; turn to friends, acquaintances, dead relatives, dead professors, etc. Such notes can be a great starting point.

- Plan on spending a lot of hours developing a lecture. This is especially true the first time you work on a specific lecture. Almost everyone that I know has never fundamentally altered a course after they have developed the notes the first time through. Yes, you tend to add and subtract topics or assignments, but a lot of the base material is there. I still use the notes that I created my first time through the history of Western Civilization over ten years ago; I do an awful lot differently now (in fact, my course now only faintly resembles my first go-round), but I still use those notes and still add to them. So, your first time through a course, plan on spending at least five to six hours per hour of class time working on your notes (OK, so I'm nuts, but it does take a lot of time). If the material is new to you, plan on even more time.

- Don't just follow the material in the textbook. Hopefully, the students can read, and there is nothing more embarrassing than to have students sitting in front of you highlighting sections of the textbook as you cover them (I have seen that done). See my next point.

- Use multiple textbooks or sources of information as you prepare a lecture; remember that your students already have the required textbook for some of the information that you are about to cover. I typically look at three texts to see how the material is covered, and I might supplement that with some information that I pull from the web or Encyclopedia Britannica (always a good starting point).

- If you don't have to, then don't lecture. By all means don't read a lecture. There is nothing more boring than an instructor sitting (or standing) in front of a class reading lecture notes, with an occasional glance at the students (I have seen that done before also).

- Plan on using some sort of outline or note system for your lecture. Easy enough.

- Plan to use some visual—a whiteboard, an overhead transparency, a Word document projected onto the screen, a web thing, something to occasionally move the students' focus from you.

- Some instructors provide students with an outline of the lecture either as a handout or on the web. I'm not sure how much it really helps.

Delivering Your Lecture

Preparing a great lecture is only half the work. You'll also need to think about how to best deliver your lecture to be sure that students learn the material you've so carefully put together. Here are some suggestions about lecture delivery:

Jennifer's Suggestions

- Students often lack good note-taking skills. Many don't take notes at all, and among those who do take notes, most write down only what appears on the board or PowerPoint slide, leaving out what you add orally to explain each point. Take a look at the notes several students have taken early in the semester to get a sense of what they are taking down, and use this information to give the class tips on how to take better notes. Remind the class regularly about the importance of writing down the details (and make good on that point by making sure that your exams reflect what you taught).

- Even if you have a lecture planned, don't be afraid to let questions or comments from the class change your direction. Assuming that their questions and comments are relevant, take advantage of their interest and pursue the direction the class takes you. If you end up with a few leftover lecture points that you need to pick up with next class, or even skip altogether, that matters less than allowing students some ownership of the direction of the class.

- Determine your lecturing style and let students know how you prefer for them to ask questions. If questions during your lecture fluster you, ask students to hold their questions until you ask for them. (But if you do this, make sure to take regular breaks for questions—if you talk for 50 minutes and then ask for questions, most students will be too overwhelmed, or asleep, to ask any.) Otherwise, let students know that they can feel free to stop you at any time with questions. I prefer this approach because it means that if students are confused about something, they can have me explain further before they get lost. If I am really in the middle of something, I acknowledge the student and say I'll call on them in just a moment, finish my thought, and then call on them. If I have a chunk of detailed or difficult material I want to explain with fewer interruptions than usual, I signal this to students, saying something like, "Now this is complicated, so I'm going to talk at you for a while." Once you have established a class rapport and routine, this sort of back-and-forth with come more and more naturally.

Charlie's Suggestions

- Don't do it!

- OK, I was just kidding, but maybe not. Think carefully about what you are trying to achieve with a lecture; maybe you don't need to do it. You certainly don't need to do it all of the time. Remember there are a variety of ways that you can convey information to students (textbook, handouts, web-based materials, even an audio CD). That means that you, as the oracle of wisdom, are not necessarily the best means to having students learn something. Think carefully about whether you need to do it; don't just accept lecturing as the default for college teaching.

- Think about students with different learning styles. Some students just do not respond well to lectures. I am far from being an expert on this (and I have to admit that I sometimes forget to do this), but I think that it is good practice to give students an alternative means to master information. Some students are not good listeners but are good readers, or vice versa.

- Look, if what I am about to suggest about lecture delivery sounds like it came straight out of one of Professor Bryant's speech classes, www.nvcc.edu/loudoun/humdiv/Speech/default.htm, you may be right. Look also at Jennifer's suggestions above.
    - Take breaks; do not talk, speak or lecture non-stop for more than ten to fifteen minutes at a time. My attention span as an adult is not much more than ten minutes or so; how long do you think a nineteen-year-old will follow what you are saying?
    - Have a visual accompaniment. This can be as simple as a Word document that you can shift attention to sometime in your lecture. It does not have to be a complicated PowerPoint presentation. I avoid any use of PowerPoint because I just find it boring; it is much easier for me to put my information on the web. (Then it is always there for students to access, even those students who missed class. You really can't put PowerPoint slides on the web.)
    - Be aware of the mechanics of your delivery; vary your voice, make pauses, glance at the class every once in a while. (If for no other reason, check who is dozing or looking at their text messages.)

- Test the students on your lecture material. There is absolutely no point in lecturing to deliver information if that information is not important enough to warrant some form of testing. That testing can be in the form of a major exam, a five-minute surprise quiz or a take-home writing assignment.

- I just said this, but I'll say it again. Don't lecture on material already available to students in the textbook. Look, if I were delivering a lecture on the history of the Russian Revolutions of 1917, there is no need for me to repeat verbatim what is in the textbook. I can explain the same events but provide additional insight or different points of view.

- Question the students to keep them lively while you are lecturing; don't wait for students to raise questions. You can readily believe that eighty percent of the students in front of you probably have no clear idea what you are telling them, and they will never ask a question. Responses that you do get from the students may help you move your lecture in a slightly different direction, so don't wait for students to initiate questions.

- Make sure students take some notes. Most students have no idea how to respond to someone talking to them at length other than to fall asleep. Years ago I had a student sitting directly in front of me class after class, arms folded, staring at me (listening, I guess). When I finally asked him why he wasn't taking any notes, he responded, "I have a photographic memory." Most students, especially younger, first-year students, have no clue about how to take notes. Explain to them that note-taking will at least help them to stay awake.

- Remember that you know your stuff, your students do not; your task is to make your material/knowledge understandable to them. Try to avoid jargon or technical language, but if you must, please be sure to carefully explain. Use the whiteboard to write difficult terms for students to see; maybe a handout is in order.

- Make sure students understand why you are lecturing.

- Just remember, we are not all gifted lecturers. In fact, most instructors are not. I certainly am not, and that is why I try to use a variety of instructional methods in my classes.

Some Additional Online Resources on Lecturing

- Barbara Gross Davis, *Tools for Teaching*, "Delivering a Lecture" (teaching.berkeley.edu/bgd/delivering.html). Davis' comments include tips on how to start and end your lectures, lots of ideas on keeping lectures engaging for students, and pointers on a developing a skilled style of delivery (using appropriate pacing, etc.).

- Johns Hopkins University, "Delivering Effective Lectures" (www.reproline.jhu.edu/english/6read/6training/lecture/delivering_lecture.htm). This paper advocates using an interactive lecture style to improve student learning and outlines in detail how an interactive lecture compares to a traditional lecture. It includes many tips on effective lecture introductions and summaries, various types of visual aides, and how to question students during a lecture, as well as discussing how to deal with your anxiety about lecturing and how to evaluate your lectures.

- Berkeley Suggestions for Teaching with Excellence, "Giving Lectures that are Easy to Outline" (teaching.berkeley.edu/compendium/sectionlists/sect7.html). This site offers succinct suggestions on several key points about lecturing, including what to write on the board during your lecture and how to provide questions to guide students during the lecture or break the lecture down into shorter segments.

CHAPTER 5
LEADING CLASS DISCUSSIONS

Next to lectures, discussions are probably the most common teaching technique in college classrooms, but they can be hard to manage. Here are some suggestions on fostering learning through discussions.

Jennifer's Suggestions

- The key to having successful discussions is to create a classroom atmosphere in which students feel safe to participate. The best way to do this is to start getting students involved from the first day of class. If you establish the expectation early on that students will be speaking in class, they will be more likely to participate. If you lecture for three weeks and then say, "Today we're having a discussion!" you will not have much success.

- You will get the most participation from students when the topic they are to discuss has just been presented. Don't plan to "discuss the reading" unless you have used some techniques to ensure that at least a significant number of students will have read it (see our tips on designing your course in Chapter 1). Instead, use a brief video clip or a short newspaper article to foster discussion on the topic; you can connect the discussion to lecture and reading material once you've gotten the ball rolling.

- Try to avoid starting discussions with vague questions like "what does everyone think?" unless you know that you have a very talkative group. Instead, use more specific questions—if you're looking at a debate or controversial issue, ask them to state which side they agree with and why, or ask them what they see as the greatest strength (or weakness) of the author's argument. Or, try starting with a more objective question, such as "What were the main points the film made about the causes of unemployment?" Sometimes this helps students get warmed up, and they will move into opinions and analysis as you go. (If they don't, you can prompt them to make that shift by saying something like, "Yes, that was a really key point the author was making. How well do you think the author proved that point?")

- You should plan a variety of questions beforehand that you could ask about the material or topic to be discussed. This way, if one prompt doesn't produce much discussion, you have other questions on hand. Don't think of discussion time as time you don't have to plan for. If you don't have these prompts prepared, you may end up floundering with a

silent class and extra time you don't know how to fill. If you're lucky, the discussion will take off in its own direction and you won't even need all of your prompts, but especially when you are teaching new material, you are much better off being fully prepared.

- Discuss the purpose of discussions with your students. Students often think that discussions are a waste of time (although many also really enjoy hearing their classmates' ideas). Explain how discussions are important for their learning, and give them some tips about how to take notes during discussions. Consider writing key points on the board as your discussion progresses in order to help students sort out the comments.

Charlie's Suggestions

- Don't be worried if things look like chaos in your class while you are discussing something. This can be particularly true if your discussions are taking place in a small group format.

- Personally, I am always open to a general class discussion even if it takes us far a field of what I intended to do in a specific class.

- Try to involve everyone. It is important to class sanity if you can reign in the omnipresent smart talker, who will probably irritate everyone in class after a short while. I usually direct specific questions at the more reticent in an effort to bring them into the discussion, but don't push them.

- I have occasionally tried a pro-con debate discussion in class, dividing the class into halves and giving a fixed amount of time to prepare a response on an issue. I also have occasionally given the entire class a specific question to answer and then left the room for them to work it out and come up with something. It is absolutely crucial that any discussion question be specific and doable.

Using Webboard & Blackboard for Online Discussions

- Blackboard, bb.vccs.edu, is a course management system used at the college that allows you to put course information online and also to use an asynchronous discussion forum. (Asynchronous means that the exchanges between participants do not occur simultaneously in real time like in a chat or instant messenger application). Instructions for using Blackboard are at tac.nvcc.edu/blackboard/Faculty/; anyone teaching a course at NVCC is eligible to set up a Blackboard account for that course. Beginning with the fall semester 2005, there will be a new version of Blackboard, learn.vccs.edu, but all of the instructions will remain the same.

- To set up an account for your course, contact Michelle Gee at mgee@nvcc.edu. Note that Blackboard can function as an entire online course or be used to support your

classroom instruction as a place where you can post course materials or hold online discussions to supplement in-class work. Blackboard has the capability to be a very flexible instructional tool.

- Webboard is a software program available at the Loudoun campus, www.nv.cc.va.us/loudoun/it/wb_info.htm, to facilitate online discussions. You should contact Scott Wood, swood@nvcc.edu, for more information about using Webboard. Webboard does not offer all the functions of Blackboard, which is a complete course management tool, but some instructors prefer Webboard's simplicity in conducting online discussions.

- There are some advantages to using an online discussion:
  - In theory, you can keep students engaged on an issue beyond the time and physical constraints of the classroom.
  - In theory, you can have students engage in discussion with a bit more thought since they have time to read, ponder and then respond.
  - In theory, you can often involve students who are shy and unwilling to participate openly in class.
  - By using an online discussion, you will be helping to improve students' technological competency.
  - You can have students post draft assignments for commentary.
  - You, as instructor, may not have to play as active a role in an online discussion as you would in the classroom.

- There are also some disadvantages to using an online discussion:
  - Students can procrastinate on posting to a discussion.
  - You will probably have to make posting required with some specific grade attached to ensure that all students participate.
  - Student exchanges on an online discussion forum often can be reduced to such dribble as, "Agree with what you wrote"; "Nice"; "I think that you are right." These kinds of exchanges have little instructional value. If you are going to use online discussions, you may need to instruct students on the types of responses you expect in order to reduce the number of meaningless posts.
  - You, as instructor, have to decide on your level of participation. How active are you going to be in an online discussion? Charlie uses online discussions, and he tends to monitor them but not be involved in the exchanges.

Some Additional Online Resources on Discussions

- Barbara Gross Davis, *Tools for Teaching*, "Encouraging Student Participation in Discussion" (teaching.berkeley.edu/bgd/participation.html). Davis offers lots of good tips here on how to increase student participation in discussions.

- Indiana University, “FAQs about Discussions” (www.iub.edu/~teaching/faqdisc.shtml). Brief answers to common questions about discussions (how to keep them going, how to deal with students who monopolize the discussion, etc.).

- Penn State, “Teaching by Discussion” (www.schreyerinstitute.psu.edu/pdf/Teaching_by_Discussion.pdf). This five-page article addresses why discussions are a valuable teaching tool and offers many concrete guidelines about how to moderate a discussion, how to deal with opposing views, what types of questions to ask, etc.

CHAPTER 6
USING SMALL GROUP EXERCISES

Research has shown that students learn the most when they are actively involved in their learning. Sitting in a chair and passively copying down information from PowerPoint slides for 75 minutes produces much less learning than does a class session in which students must actively think about, write about, and discuss the material. Since pedagogical experts began to emphasize this ideal of active learning in place of straight teacher-to-student transmission of knowledge, group work has become more and more common. It is relatively easy to put students in groups and dump an assignment in their laps; it is much harder to make group work successful and educational. Here are some suggestions to help you design effective group work.

Jennifer's Suggestions

- Despite what the research says about how well students learn from group work, many students hate group work and will moan, groan, and roll their eyes—not to mention disengage from the activity—as soon as you announce a group task. Take the time to explain to the class why you are using group work to help them see its value. It may also help to acknowledge that you are aware that some students don't like group work, and ask for their patience, pointing out that some of their classmates prefer group work over the other teaching methods you use (lecture, etc.). If you frame the work as an effort to give everyone a chance to use their preferred learning styles, students who dislike group work will be less likely to be resentful and more likely to give the exercise a try.

- For any group task that will last more than a few minutes, avoid letting students choose their own groups or just work with those sitting near them. If you choose the groups for the class, you can force mixing among students who wouldn't normally work together, increase the opportunity for learning, and decrease the likelihood of goofing off. To assign the groups, you might plan the groups before class based on what you know about the students. For example, try grouping students of similar achievement levels, or try creating mixed groups to help expose struggling students to those who are excelling. Or, base your groups on personality, grouping shy students together so that they have to talk rather than deferring to a more outgoing student. Rather than planning the groups ahead of time, you can form them on the spur of the moment in class (if you know everyone's names) or have students number off to a get a random mix in each group. I recommend using different methods of group formation over the course of the semester to keep students interested.

- Be sure to make your instructions clear (what the group needs to do and in what timeframe), and as soon as the groups get started, circulate to each group to clarify any parts of the instructions they are unsure about. Otherwise, groups may flounder at first trying to figure out what to do and waste much of the group time rather than learning from the assignment.

- Circulate among groups throughout the task. Ask groups how they're doing and take their questions. If they don't offer any questions, look over their shoulders or listen in on their conversation and ask *them* questions or point out things they might be missing. Direct questions at quieter group members as well as the more talkative ones to increase the quieter members' sense of responsibility for the group's work. Make periodic announcements to the class if you run into the same question or problem in several groups.

- Think carefully about the type of work you assign to groups. Be sure that it's an assignment on which students would benefit from hearing each others' ideas and comparing notes, such as analyzing a primary document, solving a complex problem, interpreting a case study, or synthesizing a large amount of material. Don't give groups simple tasks like filling out a basic worksheet. They'll be bored and will most likely split up the work and not interact at all.

- Consider offering an incentive for good group work. If you plan to use group work and other in-class work regularly, you might make it a component of the course grade (a participation grade, or a classwork grade). Or, if you do group assignments less frequently, consider giving extra credit points. For example, I often have student groups create visual summaries (a concept map or other diagram) of a unit of material which I then photocopy for the rest of the class as a study aide. I offer the groups up to 5 percentage points extra credit on the corresponding unit exam based on the quality of their group's summary. Having a little incentive (beyond the value of learning, which is not an adequate incentive for some students) helps motivate students to focus more on the task, which leads to better learning.

Charlie's Suggestions

- I've got to say that much of what I'm going to say seconds what Jennifer noted above. Her suggestions are all something that I try to remember to do; sometimes I forget to do some of them. For example, I might get sidetracked by a single group that either really needs my help or that is really doing good work, and then I forget to circulate.

- It is a very good idea to give students some guidelines for how to work in groups, or at least go over how you expect the groups to work. I have a handout on the web called Principles of Successful Group Work (novaonline.nvcc.edu/eli/evans/campus/His101/Aids/Groups.html) that shows one example of how you could present group work guidelines.

- Make sure students stay on task when they are in a group. No talk of the upcoming Redskins football game or weekend party activities.

- Make sure that you give the group a defined task that can be completed in class time. Avoid out-of-class group work if at all possible; my experiences in that regard have not been good. Avoid vague questions to a group such as, "What do you think of this book?"

- I tend to regroup students after a few assignments. What I sometimes do is to put the students who come prepared to do the assignment in their own groups, and those clueless in other groups. You have got to let the students know that you know who is really doing the work and who is along for the ride.

- I assign specific point values to any group project—you might call this the old carrot and stick approach—so that students know what they will or will not gain from successfully doing the group exercise. I also occasionally refuse to accept a group assignment because it is so poorly done, and I will tell the group to redo it.

Some Additional Online Resources on Group Work

- Larry Michaelsen et. al., "Designing effective group activities" (www.ou.edu/idp/tips/ideas/groupact.html). This article is an excellent resource for guidelines on designing group activities that will reduce "social loafing," get students excited about the work, and improve students' intellectual skills.

- Stanford University Newsletter on Teaching, "Cooperative Learning: Students Working in Small Groups," (ctl.stanford.edu/teach/speak/stwin99.pdf). This article is another great source for thinking about how to best design your group activities, what pitfalls you might face, and how to evaluate group work.

- National Institute for Science Education, "Cooperative Learning: Groups," (www.wcer.wisc.edu/archive/cl1/CL/doingcl/groups.htm). This site details different types of groups and their purposes; different types of interactions groups members may have with each other; advice on choosing a group size, who should form the groups, and how to form them; and information on problems groups may face.

- Barbara Gross Davis, *Tools for Teaching*, "Collaborative Learning: Group Work and Study Teams" (teaching.berkeley.edu/bgd/collaborative.html). This chapter includes lots of concrete tips for planning group work of various types and keeping the work moving. It also addresses complaints students and faculty may have about group work and how to respond to them, as well as how to evaluate students' work in groups.

CHAPTER 7
EMPLOYING ACTIVE LEARNING TECHNIQUES, OR: WHAT SHOULD I DO IN CLASS TODAY? CLASS EXERCISES TO KEEP STUDENTS INTERESTED AND FOSTER ACTIVE LEARNING

Even if you rely heavily on lecture and do not want to incorporate group work into your course, there are still some simple active learning activities you can include in your class sessions to increase student attention, interest, and learning.

Jennifer's Suggested Active Learning Activities

- Think-Pair-Share: In this activity, you give students a question to answer and several minutes to think and write on that question independently. Then, students pair with the student next to them and have several minutes to share with each other the ideas they came up with. Depending on time, you can then invite students to share some of these ideas with the whole class, or you can simply move on after the students have shared with each other. This activity is a useful way to get students interested in the topic of a lecture before you start it. Give them an intriguing question to puzzle out (for example, "Why do you think Americans are so much more religious than Europeans?") and then answer it in your lecture. Or, ask them an opinion question (for example, "Do you think that the American family is in crisis?") and then use your lecture to provide your discipline's perspective on that issue. With students primed to care about the answer your lecture will come up with, they are more likely to listen and retain the information. Their attention will be heightened even further if you have had the students share ideas with the whole class and you can then reference some of those comments as you proceed through your lecture.

- Take a Stand: This exercise requires every student in the class to express an opinion on one or several controversial issues. Draw on the chalkboard (or mark with paper on a wall) a line representing a spectrum of opinions. If you are focusing on one issue, you can label the spectrum with specific opinions (e.g., if you are analyzing the war in Iraq, you could label one end "we definitely should not have gone to war," the other end "we definitely should have gone to war," and the middle "I'm not sure whether we should have gone to war"). If you will have students respond to a series of topics, label the spectrum more generally (for example, label the ends "strongly agree" and "strongly disagree"). Have the class stand up and stand at the edges of the spectrum. Read the opinion statement (e.g., "Should the United States have gone to war with Iraq?" or "I

believe that prisoners at Guantanamo should have the same rights as American citizens in prison."). Then, ask students to determine where on the spectrum their view falls and stand there. Observe with the class the patterns you see in student responses, and ask students in each general area of the spectrum to explain why they take that point of view. Then move on to the next statement and have students reshuffle, and discuss their views on this statement. Although you could ask students to respond to these prompts from their seats in a standard discussion, having students up and moving helps keep them more awake and focused. They also enjoy seeing every student's point of view rather than hearing from only a few people, and requiring every student to choose where to stand means that every student must be a least a little more actively involved than they might otherwise have been. This exercise can be an engaging activity on the first day of class in a course that will examine current events or lots of controversial social issues, or an interesting way to explore the finer points of student opinions on an important issue discussed later in the course. Just be sure that you have enough room on the wall for students to spread out a bit. If the space is too cramped, you can't really see the range of opinion students would otherwise express because everyone gets bunched up for lack of space.

- Fishbowl Discussions: Faculty are often frustrated when many students are silent during a discussion, and students often do not know exactly what they are supposed to do during a discussion or how to contribute in a way that keeps the discussion on track. The fishbowl discussion is a way to keep things interesting in class while addressing all of these problems. For a fishbowl discussion, instead of having the whole class discuss the topic at hand, you have a small group (generally four students) discuss amongst themselves while the rest of the class looks on. Other students rotate in and out during the discussion when they have something to say until every student has been in the fishbowl at least once. To use this exercise, put four chairs in a circle in the front of the class, and take four volunteers willing to start the discussion. After explaining the rules to the class, give the four in the fishbowl a prompt and have them start discussing. The rest of the class is to listen to the discussion and, when a student feels s/he has a comment to add, the student should come up, tap the shoulder of a student currently in the fishbowl, and take that student's seat. You should have additional prompts to give the group when the discussion lags. You should also establish the rules in advance—will the fishbowl continue until every student has participated, or just until you feel the topic has been adequately covered? Can a student who has already been in the fishbowl come back, and if so, after how long? A fishbowl discussion will generally remain more focused than a normal large-class discussion, and if students know they must participate, they will be more focused on thinking of their own comments and planning when to join the group. On the downside, some students may become so focused on figuring out when they should jump in that they will pay *less* attention to the discussion than they would otherwise. Still, the fishbowl format can be a good way to shake things up and give students some variety when you are concerned that class has become too predictable (or in order to avoid getting to that point).

- Jigsaw Classroom: We know that people learn material more deeply when they have to teach what they know to someone else, so the jigsaw classroom is an exercise that forces

them to do just that. For this exercise, place students in groups such that the number in each group equals the number of total groups (for example, five groups of five students). Assign each group some segment of the material to cover (give each group a chapter, a theory, etc.). Give the groups time to become experts on their assigned topics and to plan how they might teach those topics to others. Then, reshuffle the groups so that each group has one member from each original group. After the reshuffling, members of the new groups take turns teaching the others the material they learned in their original groups. The jigsaw classroom is a useful exercise for exam review, and can also be used to process original material you have the students work through on the spot in class. The benefits of this exercise are that it requires every student to actively participate and gives every group member an incentive to really understand the assigned material in order to avoid embarrassment when having to teach it to others a few minutes later. The downside is that it won't be possible to monitor what everyone is saying, and as a result, students can accidentally pass each other misinformation rather than teaching the correct information. To at least partially avoid this problem, try to verify that each original group is on the right track before reshuffling into the teaching groups.

- Preconceptions Checks: Like Think-Pair-Share, preconceptions checks are a way to get students engaged in the material before you start to deliver it, thereby increasing their interest, attention, and retention. Before just launching into a lecture or other presentation on a new topic, ask students what they think about the topic. (Obviously, this will only work on topics students might already have views about. You will get active participation if you ask students what they think of when they think of communism, but not if you ask what they think about the Supreme Court's decision in the Dred Scott case.) List on the board the ideas students throw out, and take a few minutes to discuss with the class the patterns you see in how they view the issue. Use these ideas, preconceptions, and assumptions as a way to open your lecture, comparing the reality of the situation to their assumptions. If you want even more information about students' prior beliefs on a topic, you can do a bit more advance planning to create a more elaborate preconceptions check. Prepare a short survey about student views and factual understanding about a topic (for example, when I teach about abortion, I might ask students questions about whether they are pro-choice, pro-life, or neither; when they think abortion was illegal in the United States; etc.). Do this a few classes ahead of when you plan to teach on this topic, and then outside of class, tally the answers. Before or during your lecture on the topic, present the survey results. Students will be interested in how the class felt overall and in comparing those results to the facts you have to present in your lecture.

- Anonymous Questions/Comments: Another way to increase participation from quiet members of the class is to have students submit questions and/or comments anonymously. You can have students submit questions about the lecture you have just given, comments about a video clip or short in-class reading, or responses to a general topic or controversial issue that you pose. Bring index cards for students to write their comments, or just have them do it on notebook paper. To process the comments, you can either collect them and read them yourself, giving the class the chance to answer the question or respond to the comment, or you can collect them, reshuffle, and hand them

back out, having each student read aloud another student's comment or question and then offer a response. The latter version has the benefit of requiring more active student participation than the former. The downside is the possibility that some students will decide to write joke comments instead of real ones, and a student will have to read something embarrassing to the class or will feel awkward about what they have received. As long as you have a generally positive classroom climate, however, this type of outcome is not particularly likely, and even if one or two students take this approach, the bulk of the students will respond appropriately.

- Small Group Summaries: One way to wrap up a unit or a difficult text you've been working on for some time is to have students come up with effective ways to synthesize the information. While you could provide such a synthesis yourself (doing a "summing up" lecture or handout), students learn more when they have to think through the ideas and conceptual relationships themselves. Put students in groups and task them with producing a handout for the class that summarizes in some way the key points of the given unit or text. Encourage them to come up with the format they think would be most useful, such as a concept web, a path diagram, a chart, an outline, and/or summary paragraphs. Circulate during the group work to help them through tough spots in the material, correct misunderstandings, answer questions, and point out missing elements. Collect the handouts at the end of the class and photocopy all the handouts into a packet to distribute at the next class meeting. Go through the packet with the class, pointing out parts that are done very well and making corrections to whatever errors the groups included. Students learn from putting together their summaries and from seeing how other groups of students summarized things differently, and the packets can be very helpful study tools for exams.

Charlie's Suggestions

- Since my classes tend to be a combination of short lecture, small group discussion, class discussion, student presentations or video clips (really, there are other inventive exercise that I have used in the classroom over the years such as debates, impromptu quizzes, web searches, role playing, etc.), about the only thing else that I would add to what Jennifer noted above is that I now tend to always provide a specific grade component to anything that I have students do in the classroom. Some of Jennifer's activities don't really suit themselves to grades, but, for example, instead of anonymous questions, I will have students write down questions and give them to me for, say, 2 points per relevant question. They can either give me the questions at the end of class or at the start of the next class for me to answer. I am not entirely sure, but I think that I get marginally better focus and participation by reminding students that there is a specific grade component connected to an exercise.

Some Additional Online Resources on Active Learning Exercises

- Donald Paulson (Chemistry) and Jennifer Faust (Philosophy), "Active Learning for the College Classroom" (www.calstatela.edu/dept/chem/chem2/Active/main.htm). Great site with 29 briefly explained active and collaborative learning activities you might want to try.

PART III
MANAGING THE CLASSROOM AND DEALING WITH STUDENTS

All the best-planned activities, lectures, and discussion questions won't teach students a thing if your classroom isn't well managed. In this section, we will discuss some of the challenges you may face in keeping your classroom running smoothly, including responding to disruptive students and to the problem of cheating and plagiarism. Then, we will address student diversity and how it can impact your classroom. Finally, we will offer some suggestions on effectively advising and mentoring your students.

CHAPTER 8
MANAGING CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

Classroom management can be one of the toughest aspects of teaching, depending on your own personality and the group of students you have with you in any particular class or even on any given day. Here are some issues you may face and suggestions for handling them.

Jennifer's Suggestions

- You will always have at least one "problem student," and probably more than one, in each class. Students can become problems in various ways, from chatting with friends during class or being otherwise disruptive to being *too* engaged in class and dominating the discussion—and students will always surprise you with new ways to be rude and disruptive. (My favorite example of this phenomenon, from Peter Sacks' *Generation X Goes to College*, is a student who brought in a portable TV and watched it during class.) The key to dealing with this inevitability of teaching is, first and foremost, to keep your sense of humor. If you get frustrated and start lecturing the class about their behavior every time you see someone talking in the back or hear a cell phone go off, the overall classroom climate will deteriorate. Even students who agree with you about their classmates' disruptive behavior don't want a negative or hostile tone to the classroom. Try to take it in stride, at least until you can talk to the student individually.

- I recommend that you avoid calling the student out in front of the whole class unless the behavior is egregious (such as having a cell phone conversation during a lecture). Better to pull the student aside after class and discuss the matter in a way that won't make the student feel ashamed. Also keep in mind that what seems like disrespectful behavior may be driven by outside factors you aren't aware of—for example, a student who falls asleep in class may have just been moved to the night shift at work or may have a sick child. Speaking to the student individually rather than assuming the worst and shaming the student in front of the class gives the student the chance to tell you what's going on. If the behavior turns out to be driven by a personal situation, you can be more understanding about it (assuming that it does not disrupt other students) or make suggestions to help the student deal with the situation better. If the behavior turns out to be just college student rudeness, you can always still chastise the student one-on-one if you feel the situation warrants it. But for many students, just having to face you individually is enough to quiet the behavior.

- Do not let students belittle or ridicule other students. Sometimes a class clown or "popular kid" type will want to show off by mocking another student's comment or demeanor. In this case, I recommend stopping discussion immediately and addressing the offending student in front of the class to make it clear that such behavior will not be tolerated. Similarly, do not allow students to use racial slurs or other offensive language. You have to decide for yourself what language is acceptable, but whatever you decide, I recommend keeping the boundaries clear and not allowing any instance of inappropriate language to go by without correcting it.

- Besides managing general student behavior, you have to manage the flow of conversation and interaction in the classroom. One thing we all do when we are nervous is rush through things, hurrying along to cover up awkward silences, to avoid questions we fear we can't answer, to gloss over something we think we're not explaining very well, or to squeeze that last bit of information in before the class time ends. But hurrying is one of the biggest enemies of student learning and of developing rapport and trust. Students often become frustrated when we rush through the material; they may give up on taking notes or tune out from what we are saying as a result of this frustration. Try to avoid rushing in this way. If you can't quite finish the material that day, that's fine—finish it next time. If the class is silent for ten seconds and no one asks a question, that's fine. (In fact, leaving enough silent time for shy students to actually think of a question and get up the nerve to ask it is one important way of encouraging broader class participation.) If a student asks a question you can't answer, that's fine. Don't try to cover it up; tell them honestly what you can on the matter, and tell them honestly what you don't know about it. The more genuine you are in your interactions with your students, the more they will engage with you and your class.

Charlie's Suggestions

- Jennifer has some very good points. Let me just add that every instructor reacts to problems in the classroom in a different manner; much is dependent on your own personality. I have just a few comments in kind of reverse order.

- Student behavior issues: These run the gamut from being habitually late to class (I have know professors to have closed the door at the start of class to prevent late arrivals from disrupting the class) to beeping cell phones to glancing at text messages to chatting away to sleeping to confrontational behavior. I have experienced some particularly bad instances of student behavior while watching video segments in class (there is something about the lights going out that just turns off student brains). When that happens, I stop the video and ask if there are any questions and then resume. For a moment I was annoyed, I said something about it, and then I moved on. (I also usually give students a ten-question quiz on any video material so that they do have some incentive to pay attention.)

- So stay calm when dealing with behavioral issues; I constantly have to remind myself that I was not always the ideal student in the classroom, especially in big lectures. I

usually don't mind chaos in the classroom when we are doing group work; don't mind some chit chat or small talk; I'll even tolerate some glances at a cell phone; but if it gets out of hand I usually deal with the student at the exact moment and outside in the hallway (I do not wait until the end of class to deal with behaviors that irritate me)—then I return to class, smile and move on.

- Finally, how do you deal with the really nasty student—the student who hates you and everything that you do in the class but who is intent on continuing to show up and convert other students? I have known instances where an entire class loathed an instructor; usually the situation remained polite, but you never know. So my advice is to get help. Talk to someone else in your discipline, talk to your discipline coordinator, speak to the division chair. It might help to arrange a class visit; another instructor in the room can work wonders to diffuse a student or a class.

Some Additional Online Resources on Classroom Management

- Patrick J. Morrissette, "Reducing Incivility in the University/College Classroom" (www.ucalgary.ca/%7Eiejll/volume5/morrissette.html). This journal article gives an overview of what classroom incivility is, how common it is, how faculty usually respond to it, and how it affects the classroom. It concludes with a discussion of ten concrete suggestions for reducing incivilities in your own classroom.

- Arizona State University, "Conflict De-escalation" (www.asu.edu/provost/intergroup/resources/classconflict.html). This article offers nine different ways to deal with situations of heated debate/conflict in classroom discussions. A few portions of the tips refer to resources specific to this university, but most are generally applicable and good to keep in mind in case a controversial topic erupts in your class.

CHAPTER 9
PREVENTING AND HANDLING CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM

Dealing with a student who has cheated on an exam or plagiarized a paper is never pleasant. Here are some strategies you might use to try to make cheating and plagiarism less likely to occur in the first place, and some tips on how to deal with it if it happens anyway.

Jennifer's Suggestions

- Like it or not, you'll have to deal with students' unethical conduct at some point, and probably every semester. The first defense against these behaviors is preventative measures. Have a penalty for plagiarism and/or cheating in your syllabus, point it out to students on the first day of class, and remind them of it when they do their first assignment or are preparing for their first exam. Avoid common assignments, like book reports that are mostly summary, that make it easy to plagiarize. (Instead, base your assignments on class material so students will have less opportunity to find text they can copy from another source.) Take measures to make it harder to cheat on exams (for example, on a multiple choice exam in a large class, use several versions of the test with the test items, and possibly also the answer choices, scrambled, so students sitting next to each other do not have the same test form).

- Be prepared for the fact that your preventative measures against plagiarism and cheating will inevitably fail some of the time. Expect that many of the students you catch in either form of cheating will whine, moan, cry, make excuses, apologize and ask for another chance, tell you that they *always* write their papers this way, and get angry at you for being unfair to them. Try to remain calm and explain to them clearly why the behavior is an important violation and why you impose the penalty that you do. If the student is really agitated, you might suggest that he or she take some time to calm down and come back to speak with you about it again later. Keep in mind that the student is probably upset, surprised, and alarmed at this outcome, and try to be sensitive to the student's feelings even though your first instinct may be to be angry at him or her instead.

Charlie's Suggestions

- Plagiarism and cheating. The easiest way to prevent these problems is to not put your students in a position where they can cheat. For example, when taking an exam in class, right in front of you, where they have to sit and write everything out (with no advance

warning of any specific questions), there is little opportunity for a student to cheat. Giving a student a take-home exam presents a lot of ways to cheat. The kind of assignments that you ask students to complete can also lend themselves to plagiarism and cheating. Make sure that you clearly explain to students on the first or second day of your class your definition of plagiarism and cheating and your penalties. I use a specific handout that I have on the web (novaonline.nvcc.edu/eli/evans/Resources/Plagiarism.html).

- Remember that if you suspect an issue of plagiarism, it may take an awful lot of your time to prove it. For example, I am convinced that some of my students routinely take liberties with one of my assignments, but it has proven very difficult to actually prove any plagiarism (to actually track down the source of their cheating). So I live with that, but one of my ways to short-circuit cheating is to use a lot of small assignments in my courses. That way, there is no really big point value associated with any single assignment. I also do an awful lot of classroom work, so I can get to see a particular student's abilities first-hand.

- So, I know that cheating goes on, but after a while you can tell who is doing it, and you can structure your course and assignments in a way that don't really make the risk a big pay-off, as I noted just above. For example, you do not have to make that take-home paper worth 20% of the course grade. You make it 5% and then you add an in-class quiz on the material that is worth 15%.

Some Additional Online Resources on Cheating and Plagiarism

- Barbara Gross Davis, *Tools for Teaching*, "Preventing Academic Dishonesty" (teaching.berkeley.edu/bgd/prevent.html). Davis gives lots of great tips about preventing cheating in all aspects of the course, from papers to exams, including everything from writing the exam or assignment to exam proctoring techniques to reducing the pressures that often lead students to cheat.

- Robert Harris, "Anti-Plagiarism Strategies for Research Papers" (www.virtualsalt.com/antiplag.htm). Harris gives a detailed overview of all aspects of plagiarism in research papers and how to prevent it, including reasons students plagiarize, how to organize the course and craft assignments to avoid plagiarism, and how to identify the plagiarism that does occur.

- Bill Taylor, "Integrity: Academic and Political: A Letter to my Students" (www.lib.umich.edu/acadintegrity/instructors/preventing/Bill_Talor.pdf). This six-page letter is a document Taylor apparently gives to his students at the beginning of the semester. It interestingly broadens the idea of academic integrity to cover all aspects of coursework (not just cheating vs. doing your own work) and outlines not only what academic integrity looks like for students, but also what it looks like for instructors. The letter is an interesting read and may give you some ideas for how to talk to your own students about this issue.

- Renoir Gaither, “Signals of Possible Plagiarism in Written Work” (www.lib.umich.edu/acadintegrity/instructors/violations/signals.htm). This very brief piece provides a useful listing of things that might tip you off to a plagiarized paper.

CHAPTER 10
DEALING WITH STUDENT DIVERSITY

The diversity of the student body is one the greatest strengths of community colleges. Because we are affordable and open-access institutions, we have much greater student diversity than most four-year colleges and universities. You will find your classrooms diverse in terms of age, race and ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and disability status. Part of our job as instructors is to deal respectfully with students from all backgrounds, but sometimes it is not clear how to best do that.

Depending on your own background, you may not have ever experienced the marginalization one may feel when in the minority in a particular setting. Research on students of color, women of all races, gay and lesbian students, students from working-class backgrounds, and others show that these students often feel left out, ignored, and belittled by faculty and by their fellow students. As you can imagine, such feelings, at the least, make college more difficult, and may seriously impact students' academic achievement. Here are some suggestions to help you successfully negotiate the many types of diversity in your classroom and avoid contributing to these problems.

Jennifer's Suggestions

- Hard as it can sometimes be, try to always remember the diversity of your audience and address your comments in a way that recognizes that diversity. For example, don't make a historical reference and then say, "But you all are too young to remember that," because such a comment marginalizes older students, who often already feel out of place surrounded by so many teenagers. Instead, try "Most of you are too young to remember that." Similarly, try to avoid making offhand references to American popular culture without explaining them. While many of your students will appreciate the humor, you will make international students and students who have recently immigrated feel left out. For example, if I were calling roll and several people in a row didn't answer; I might be inclined to break up the monotony by saying, "Bueller? Bueller?" If I did so, I would hope I would remember to add, "That's a line from a funny eighties movie called *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, for those who don't know what I'm talking about." Small changes like this will help ensure that all of your students feel acknowledged and respected in your classroom.

- Be careful with humor. There are some types of jokes commonly accepted in American popular culture that may be very offensive to students in your classroom. Do not make

jokes about "rednecks" or "white trash." Do not make jokes that denigrate men who do traditionally female activities. Do not make jokes about overweight people. Do not use "retarded" or "gay" as derogatory words. Do not make jokes about JAPs (Jewish American Princesses) or use any other ethnically-based jokes (including ones you see as positive, such as a joke about Asian-American people being good at math). In your own life, you can decide whether you believe such group-based humor is funny. As an instructor, it is your responsibility to make the classroom safe for all students.

- Our model of appropriate classroom behavior is the behavior most typical of white, middle-class students. Students of racial and ethnic minority groups, from working-class backgrounds, and of other nationalities may have different ideas of appropriate classroom behavior, ranging from being very vocal to entirely silent. This doesn't mean that you have to accept behavior you find disruptive or that you can't try to draw out a silent student, but keep in mind that cultural background *may* be driving the behavior, and when you address it with the student, explain what's bothering you about the behavior rather than attacking it as objectively bad. This approach leaves students the opportunity to explain their behavior to you and helps you understand one another and come to a more satisfying result for both of you.

- Never, under any circumstances, turn to a student of a particular background and say, "So, what do XX people think about this?" Students of color cite such questions as one of the most common marginalizing behaviors of college faculty, and students from other minority groups would surely feel the same way if faced with such a question. If a student independently raises his or her background and speaks about what people from that background generally feel, think, or experience, you can ask further questions or make further comments from there. But until a student voluntarily places herself in a position to "speak for the group" or speak about her racial/ethnic (or other) identity, it is not appropriate for you to place that burden on her.

- Another common mistake faculty make is to pointedly look at a student from a given background whenever discussing that group (for example, looking directly at the one African-American student in the group when talking about slavery or affirmative action). Teachers often do this unconsciously. Think about how it might make those students feel, and be a bit more conscious of scanning the room as you normally would when talking about such topics.

- Don't make assumptions about a particular student's background; get to know each student individually instead. For example, a student who appears to be from the Middle East may come from a family who has just immigrated to the U.S., may be here on a student visa, or may come from a family that has been in the U.S. for generations. Don't fall into the trap of seeing a non-white student and assuming that he or she is a recent arrival or doesn't speak or write English fluently.

- Avoid basing your behavior on anything you've been told about the way a certain group behaves or thinks. Many well-meaning diversity training workshops offer "insights" like "Asian students tend to be quiet." This information usually has some kernel of truth in it,

but taking such broad generalizations to heart can cause much more harm than good. Treat all your students as individuals. Remember, too, that within each of the general classifications Americans use (Asian-American, Latino, etc.) there are many different ethnic backgrounds lumped together, and the differences between Nicaraguans and Mexicans, between Vietnamese people and Japanese people, are much larger than most white Americans realize. The more you avoid trying to draw conclusions about certain types of students, the better.

Charlie's Suggestions

- Like Jennifer noted above, be careful about jokes. This does not mean that humor has no place in the classroom; you just have to be careful. Don't insult anyone.

- Be quick to nip in the bud any student actions (snide comments, whispers, comments such as "How stupid") that might be considered as derogatory towards another student.

- I think that it is pretty simple: treat everyone fairly and equally in your classroom. Make sure your students behave that way too.

Some Additional Online Resources on Student Diversity

- Shari Saunders and Diana Kardia, "Creating Inclusive College Classrooms" (www.crlt.umich.edu/gsis/P3_1.html). This excellent article addresses a range of issues about making your classroom inclusive for all students, including issues of course content, classroom interaction, and course policies. It includes an especially useful section listing common assumptions faculty make about students and student behavior and why these assumptions may be wrong given the diversity in our classrooms.

- Arizona State University, "Guidelines for Constructive Dialogue in the Classroom" (www.asu.edu/provost/intergroup/resources/classguidelines.html). This site offers guidance on how to make sure that your diverse classroom produces valuable and educational dialogue rather than offensive and upsetting exchanges. It includes tips on how to help your students dialogue effectively and important reminders about erroneous assumptions you might make about your students.

- Ohio State University, Fisher College of Business, "Teaching Diversity" (fisher.osu.edu/diversity/teach.htm). This list of more than twenty ways to honor diversity and respect all students in your classroom is based on the premise that diversity should be a concern in every college course, no matter what the discipline. The tips are relevant across all teaching fields.

- Barbara Gross Davis, *Tools for Teaching*, "Diversity and Complexity in the Classroom: Considerations of Race, Ethnicity, and Gender" (teaching.berkeley.edu/bgd/diversity.html). In this piece, Davis discusses diversity issues

in course design, discussion and other classroom interactions, exams and assignments, and advising. She also offers tips on how to deal with your biases and assumptions about particular groups.

- Mary J. Allen, "Teaching Non-Traditional Students" (www.psychologicalscience.org/teaching/tips/tips_0900.cfm). In this article Allen discusses why it is so important to be concerned with reaching students from every background and addresses ways to do this in all aspects of your course, from course planning to group work to grading practices.

CHAPTER 11
ADVISING AND MENTORING YOUR STUDENTS

Research on higher education has shown that the personal relationships that students have with faculty—their interactions with us outside of class when they can get individual attention—are a crucial part of student success and persistence in college. Although we often think of advising as a formal meeting in which faculty help students choose courses, it is actually much broader than that. Think of advising and mentoring as just terms for the ways you can interact with your students to help them get the most out of college and effectively plan and move toward successful futures. Here are some suggestions for making sure these interactions are enjoyable for you and helpful for your students.

Jennifer's Suggestions

- The key to good advising is to really listen to what your students are saying. Don't be too quick to jump to offering guidance. Really let them explain their concerns, and ask lots of follow-up questions to better understand what assumptions, values, and opinions are guiding their decisions. You will give better advice if you fully understand how the student is thinking and what misunderstandings might need correcting in order for the student to find the right path. The chance to really talk about these issues can also help students clarify in their own minds what choices they face, so a good discussion can help your student in several ways.

- Remember that students at a community college will be pursuing a really wide range of career goals, including the fact that many will not be transferring to a four-year institution. Try to strike a balance between supporting the goals the student currently has and helping the student broaden her or his horizons. Help your students consider further study by pointing out the strengths they have that make them well-suited for college work (many community college students lack academic self-confidence and therefore rule out further college work without a realistic assessment of their abilities); discussing what upper-level undergraduate work and graduate work are like (many students are the first in their families to attend college, so they may not have anyone who can tell them what comes next); and describing the career opportunities and other benefits that accrue to a college (or graduate school) graduate. Your role is to provide students with better information and help to guide their thinking so that they can make educated decisions about their college and career paths, whether or not they choose further higher education.

- Don't be afraid to send students elsewhere for help when you don't know how to help. Students with detailed questions about how their courses will transfer to a particular school or how the transfer application process works should generally be sent to speak with a counselor. Students with severe emotional problems should also be sent to speak with a counselor. Students facing other life difficulties, such as sudden homelessness, hunger, child care problems, or divorce will need other types of resources (which you may be able to help the student find, or which the counseling office may be able to direct you to). But don't use "I don't know" as an excuse to brush a student off. Discuss what's going on with the student before you send him or her along to another source. The student may have other questions s/he needs answered, and even more importantly, a student who feels ignored and bounced around among different offices may give up rather than continuing to get the needed help. If you pay attention to the student before referring the student elsewhere, you make it more likely that s/he will take your referral and actually get help.

- Advising and mentoring should also involve being a role model for your students. You may find that students come to your office hours or stop by before or after class with news clippings, or to discuss a book they read or experience they had that they feel relates to class material. Use these opportunities to engage the student in an individual intellectual discussion. Don't just take the clipping, say thanks, and get back to answering your email. Even if you are busy, try to make students feel welcome and encouraged to talk with you, and show them what it means to think and engage with the world around you by really discussing whatever topic they've brought up.

Charlie's Suggestions

- Always send students to counseling for answers to detailed questions about which course will transfer to which institution (and if it will fill any transfer requirements). The Counseling Office has access to all the detailed transfer articulation agreements between NVCC and other colleges.

- Many times, advising issues will come up in the classroom, either in the context of a student noting he or she is going to transfer to another college or just in informal discussions about a major choice, etc. Just be prepared to listen and then offer your opinions at the time, but qualify it if you are not sure of specific details. These informal classroom discussions can be very helpful to students and a great opportunity to involve an entire class.

- Also, I encourage faculty to try and get students to aim higher with their academic goals. Often our community college students are unsure if they will be able to do well at a four-year college, especially if that school is quite a distance away. In reality, often students have career ideas that might be better met at academic institutions other than those in the immediate Northern Virginia region; encourage students to look throughout the US for the program that would best meet their goals. Try and reassure them about the availability of financial aid, student support, etc. at those schools. Give them some idea

of the opportunities that they will have (and the fun, too). Remind them that their choice of college will be really important to them for their future.

Some Additional Online Resources on Advising and Mentoring

- National Academy of Sciences, "The Mentor as Faculty Advisor" (www.nap.edu/readingroom/books/mentor/2.html). This chapter is part of a larger handbook on advising students in science and engineering, but most of the content is useful for anyone advising and mentoring undergraduates. It discusses the various topics you might need to discuss with advisees and how to build a trusting and respectful relationship with your students so that you can get at their real concerns and advise them as effectively as possible.

- Rebecca D. Foushée and Merry J. Sleigh, "Going the Extra Mile: Identifying and Assisting Struggling Students" (www.psychologicalscience.org/teaching/tips/tips_0203.cfm). This article encourages faculty to make the effort to find and help students having academic difficulties. It outlines various reasons students may struggle in college and discusses more than fifteen ways to figure out which students need your help and how you might help them.

- Berkeley Compendium of Suggestions for Teaching with Excellence, "Giving Personal Help to Students" (teaching.berkeley.edu/compendium/sectionlists/sect15.html). This article provides brief, concrete tips on giving individual help to struggling students. The site offers 8 suggested ways you can help these students, including using handouts or self-paced learning resources. It also discusses strategies for having effective interventions and meetings with students having difficulty in your course.

PART IV
ASSESSING STUDENT LEARNING AND GIVING HELPFUL FEEDBACK

The main goal of your teaching, of course, is to help students learn, and to do that effectively, you need to assess what they are learning and give them feedback on their performance that will help them continue to improve their work. In this section of the book, we will discuss how to design and give feedback on writing assignments, some quick ways to assess student learning in class, and how to write and grade exams. Each of these activities assesses student learning and also helps you assess the effectiveness of your teaching techniques.

CHAPTER 12
USING WRITING ASSIGNMENTS AND GIVING HELPFUL FEEDBACK

Reading the feedback you give them on their written work is one of the most significant learning opportunities students have. Nonetheless, faculty are often not trained in how to comment on papers, exams, lab reports, or other work in a way that is the most pedagogically useful. Everyone loses in this situation because the student doesn't learn and you have wasted your time writing comments that aren't instructive. Here are some suggestions on how to make sure your feedback helps students learn.

Jennifer's Suggestions

- As with parenting, you must choose your battles. If you correct every error and comment on every idea in a student's paper, you will spend an impossible amount of time grading and will leave students feeling so overwhelmed that they won't bother to try to understand all your comments anyway. Decide what you see as the most important types of errors to correct, and focus on those. You may decide this for the class overall (for example, as a sociology instructor, my top priority is to correct errors in sociological thinking; issues of organization, grammar, and use of evidence are secondary concerns), or for each individual paper (perhaps one paper is perfect on the main point you usually have to correct, so you have the time to comment on an issue, such as grammar or style, that you don't have time to comment on for other students).

- Give students guidelines about what you expect from their written work before the first assignment. Offer them a sample excellent paper if possible; at the least, offer tips and expectations that are as detailed as you can make them. (You'll get better at this once you have used the assignment one or more times. Seeing the common errors students made will help you refine your instructions.)

- When handing back papers, exams, lab reports, or other written work, speak to the class as a whole about common strengths and weaknesses you observed across the board. You might also consider, especially if many students did poorly, spending some class time looking at a sample excellent paper (I provide a paper with the students' name removed; Charlie often asks students to volunteer their papers for discussion and for extra credit). Give students time to read the paper and answer some questions about the paper's strengths, then discuss them as a class. This will help students who did poorly feel less uncertain about why they did poorly and give everyone a model for their next assignment.

- Even if the student is a poor writer, don't get caught up in making grammatical corrections if you're not teaching an English course. Research on teaching writing shows that students often don't know grammar rules, so they don't learn anything when we add apostrophes, change "affect" to "effect," or write comments like "watch subject-verb agreement" because they don't know how to apply that correction to the rest of their writing. When you find students who have very poor writing skills, tell them so (tactfully), express your concern about their success in college courses, and tell them about the Writing Center and what it has to offer. If you feel strongly about student writing skills, you might consider having a rewrite policy in which papers with a certain number of grammatical errors require a rewrite before students will receive a grade, or a policy in which students are required to visit the Writing Center with a draft and to turn in proof of that visit when they turn in their final papers.

- Remember that you can never be sure, especially early in the semester, which students are pouring their heart and soul into their work and which are not. Even if work looks sloppy, avoid comments like "It looks like you didn't spend much time on this," which will be painful for a student who *did* spend a lot of time. For the same reason, always begin your comments with encouragement and praise of some kind, even if it's an awful paper and you can't find much to praise. If all a student sees is criticism, s/he might be too frustrated to take in your suggestions.

- Don't try to reinvent the wheel. If you want to give students some guidance on a particular writing point (working on thesis statements, using evidence, etc.), speak with the staff at the Writing Center or do some quick internet searches. Many universities have handouts on basic writing issues posted online for you to direct students to, use in class, or alter with your own additional comments and suggestions.

- If you are assigning students papers that involve any amount of library research, you will need to give them some training on what types of sources to use (if you don't, they'll just do a Google search and use whatever random sites pop up) and how to find those sources (for example, few students know how to use the online databases to find newspaper or journal articles). You can speak with a librarian and arrange to bring your class for a library orientation session tailored to teaching your students the skills needed for your particular assignment, or you can provide them that information yourself in writing and/or orally. (You can see an example of this in my detailed handout for a research project I assign at www.nvcc.edu/home/jlerner/soc202project.html. I tend to be very wordy, but the handout might at least give you some ideas about what type of information to go over with students before a research task.)

- If you assign a term paper or other large project, I strongly recommend that you break the assignment down into steps with several due dates over the course of the semester. If you don't, students will put the project off and you will get much shoddier work from them in the end—not to mention that they will learn much more if they put long-term effort into the project. For example, you might have a due date for a statement of topic, for evidence of ongoing research (e.g., an annotated bibliography), or for outlines or drafts of

the project. (The project handout I mentioned above also illustrates some ways I have broken a large project into several steps.)

Charlie's Suggestions

- I tend to recommend not getting caught up in trying to edit a student paper or to make mountains of comments. Most students a) don't care enough, b) don't understand how to react to the commentary, c) may not have enough writing experience to understand detailed editorial comments, d) are most concerned about the grade, and e) are incapable of reading your, or my, handwriting. I am not sure how great a learning experience it is to receive a paper back that is covered is tiny red scrawls. By the way, I prefer that students submit their assignments to me by email. This helps me to quickly type up the essentials of my critique and get it back to them fast. It also helps students learn to manage their email and gives me a permanent copy of both the submitted work and my response.

- I do recommend getting graded assignments back to students as quickly as possible so that they can understand your critique while the material is still relatively fresh in their minds. The speedy return of work also allows students to put a bad grade behind them and move on to new material. After emailing grades/comments back to students, I will go over some general comments about the writing assignment in the next class, pointing out common errors that students made, etc.

- It is important that you provide as much clarity as possible of what you expect in an assignment and that you provide the tools for students to write as you desire. I have a lot of materials available on the web to support my different courses, for example, a Sample Historical Document Analysis (novaonline.nvcc.edu/eli/evans/resources/document.html) and Charlie's History Writing Center (novaonline.nvcc.edu/eli/evans/WritingCenter/WritingCenter.htm). I also provide some Sample Papers for the first writing assignment in my courses, e.g., (novaonline.nvcc.edu/eli/evans/campus/His101/Aids/Gilgamesh.html). I make it clear to students that I expect a well-structured analytical paper, and I do my best to explain what I mean by that. I also re-assure them that they will not necessarily succeed at this at once, but that they should keep trying.

- I suggest avoiding assignments worded in a fashion that can confuse students. For example, "Read Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, and write a five page book review." Student papers will be all over the map, and you will have no specific criteria on which to base your graded critique. Maybe a better assignment would be, "Read Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, and write a five page paper that examines the nature of religious imagery in the book."

- Please consider the length of the papers that you assign to students and the resources that you provide to ensure that they will succeed with their writing assignments. It is a great idea to have available sample assignments so that students have a clear idea of what you

are looking for. Remember, seriously think what you wish to achieve by assigning five-page papers to a class of one hundred students.

- Finally, I have to keep reminding myself that I should always offer some encouragement or praise on any paper. (Sometimes, realistically I just can't do that on a very poor paper.) If I forget, and I often do, I always try to make some general such comments to the entire class when I hand back papers.

Some Additional Online Resources on Writing Assignments and Giving Feedback

- Laura Brady, English Department, West Virginia University, "Responding to Writing," (www.as.wvu.edu/~lbrady/response.html). This site briefly lays out some basic principles of helpful feedback, including an eight-step process you can use to be sure that you provide useful comments on each paper.

- University of Washington Political Science Writing Center, "Responding to Student Writing," (depts.washington.edu/pswrite/responding.html). This brief handout raises and corrects several common myths about how to best comment on student papers and offers several contrasting examples of helpful and unhelpful comments to help you improve the way you comment on student papers.

- Penn State's Writing Across the Curriculum Program, "Responding to Student Writing," (www.psu.edu/dept/cew/faculty/student.htm). Another brief list of basic tips on how to improve your comments on student papers. Also includes three interesting models to consider for different ways to offer feedback, including a response grid and how to use peer feedback on writing.

- Dartmouth Materials for Faculty, "Responding to Student Text," (www.dartmouth.edu/~writing/materials/faculty/methods/responding.shtml). This article is longer than the others but provides a lot of useful information about the different types of comments we make (facilitative, directive, corrective, and evaluative), how to manage your paper grading time, and how to identify the particular problem a student's writing has rather than just slapping a low grade on the paper. The article also discusses conferences with students about their writing, offering positive comments about student writing, and stages of students' intellectual development that may be observed in their writing.

CHAPTER 13
ASSESSING STUDENT LEARNING IN THE CLASSROOM, OR: ARE THEY GETTING IT? QUICK AND EASY WAYS TO ASSESS STUDENT LEARNING BEFORE THEY FAIL THE TEST

Most of the time, teachers have no idea whether the class really understands what has been presented. Maybe a few students have participated in a discussion or asked questions, and we assume that if they now understand, everyone else must as well. To avoid a rude awakening come exam time, it can be helpful to use some techniques along the way to find out what students do and don't understand. This way, you can clarify the material and get students on the right track well before exam time. There are many methods of getting this feedback, which are often called classroom assessment techniques (CATs), and they are described extensively in Thomas Angelo and K. Patricia Cross's book *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers*. Here, we offer a sampling of CATs you might try and some comments about the pros and cons of using CATs.

Jennifer's Suggested CATs

First, here are a few CATs that are quick and easy to use but offer big rewards:

- Muddiest Point: At the end of class or end of a section of lecture, have students take a couple of minutes to write down (anonymously) what they thought was the muddiest (i.e., most confusing/least clear) point of the lecture. Have them explain in about a sentence what they didn't understand so you can better understand what the problem is. Collect these and read them after class; at the next class, clarify those points that students commonly cited as muddy.

- Most Important Point(s): Use the same technique you would use for the muddiest point exercise, but this time, ask students to write (in sentences/phrases so you can understand their reasoning) one to three (you decide how many to ask for) of the most important points from the day's material. Reading what the students think was most important can be extremely enlightening about how they process what you say, and it gives you the opportunity to let them know at the next session whether they are focusing on the right portions of the material. You can also re-emphasize any parts of the material you see as important but that the students did not.

- Directed Paraphrase: Using the same technique as for the muddiest point exercise, ask students to summarize in their own words some important piece of material (the last 20 minutes of lecture, or a complicated concept or theory, for example). After reading the responses, at the next class you can clarify misunderstandings that become apparent when the students do the translations; you can also read some excellent examples aloud (or provide them in a handout) to help students see different ways of correctly expressing the ideas.

- Remaining Questions: Using the same technique as for the muddiest point exercise, ask students to write one or more questions they still have about the material. You can answer the common questions at the next session. Be sure to let students know that not answering their question doesn't mean that it was not a good question, and encourage them to come ask you privately so that you can still answer it. Many students won't bother to do this, but your encouragement helps avoid leaving a student feeling that her/his contribution was not as worthwhile as that of other students.

And finally, here are two CATs that you might want to try once you've experimented a bit with the simpler ones. These two take more time to use, but they provide very useful information for you and for students:

- Background Knowledge Surveys: It can be very helpful to know what background knowledge students in your class bring to your discussion of a particular topic. To help you best pitch the level of your instruction, you might wish to use a background knowledge survey to assess the students' preparation. Write questions that tell you what you want to know about their experience with certain topics, their current understanding of certain skills, or their opinions on issues you'll cover later in the course. For example, you might list several key concepts, theories, or issues and have students mark whether they are very familiar, somewhat familiar, or not at all familiar with that topic. Or, ask students to define, as best they can, a general topic they should have some understanding of, such as the process a person should undertake in writing a paper. If you will be studying controversial issues many students will be familiar with, try giving them multiple choice questions to assess their current opinions on the issues. Whatever types of questions you choose, this survey will take some time for you to prepare, unlike the simpler CATs listed above, and it will take a bit more class time than the CATs listed above as well. It also requires advance planning (to write and conduct the survey before you cover the material), whereas the simpler CATs can always be done on the spur of the moment. The information you glean, however, can be extremely useful in starting off your teaching of a new topic by meeting students where they are and being prepared for the sorts of misunderstandings they might bring to the table.

- RSQC2: RSQC2 (Recall, Summarize, Question, Comment, Connect) is a slightly more detailed version of the short responses students give in exercises like the muddiest point or the directed paraphrase. It puts together several of the tasks students might complete in one of those short responses, and thereby gives you more information and requires the students to think about the material in several different ways. This CAT takes more class time than some of the others listed above and takes more time for you to read through and

figure out how to respond, but it's worth a try to see what you can learn about how students are processing the material. For RSQC2, students respond (anonymously) to five prompts about the current piece of material (that day's lecture, for example). For the first several times you use this exercise, you should give students a form to fill out explaining each of the five prompts and giving them space to respond; once students learn the procedure, you could just remind them what each letter stands for and they could respond to the prompts on their own paper. For the first prompt, Recall, students should list the most important ideas from the selected material. Second, for Summarize, they should put those key points into a sentence to explain the ideas and their relationships more clearly. Third, for Question, they should note a question they still need answered about this material. Fourth, for Comment, the student should offer a comment about their comfort level with this material (do they feel uncertain about it, completely confident in their understanding of it, comfortable with one part but not another?). Finally, for Connect, students should articulate how this material is related to other aspects of the course. For example, how does it relate to the unit it is placed in, or to the overall point of the course or to the material studied the week previous? Working through these prompts will help students assess themselves (they will become aware of which points make sense to them and where they are confused) and give you a deeper sense of student understanding than you would get from the simpler CATs.

Charlie's Comments

I have just a few things to say about using classroom assessment techniques, and I have used them off-and-on over the past ten years.

- CATs do take time and mental energy. You have to decide on the technique to use; you need to administer the exercise in class (although that usually doesn't take more than two-three minutes), you need to read the responses and then you have to figure out what to do with the responses. After using an assessment activity, are you going to change something about how you teach that specific lesson in the future, or do your assessment findings apply to other lessons that you might have planned for that semester? In other words, you have to have some idea of what you are doing and why you are doing assessment.

- You have to convince students to take the assessment activity seriously; that is not always an easy task, especially if you are going to do the activity at the end of class when students have other things on their mind (primarily, "get out!"). If you do something at the beginning of class, then you need some sort of transition into your new material. I have occasionally used a "muddiest point" thing at the start of class to summarize what we did the last class. In theory, it provides some nice continuity.

- Although it might be considered bending the rules a bit, I think that you can combine some assessment with graded assignments, i.e., short responses at the beginning or end of class can be used as a small, graded in-class assignment. I can do a short recall exercise

about what went on last class for say two-three points; don't be surprised if you get blank stares or blank answers handed in.

- You don't have to assess learning in every class; you can do it once, twice, three or even twenty times a semester. It is your choice.

CHAPTER 14
CREATING AND GRADING EXAMS

Exams are usually the main way we evaluate student learning, so it is important that we construct high-quality exams and grade them fairly. Here are some suggestions on how to achieve both of these goals

Jennifer's Suggestions

- Do your best to prepare students in advance for what the exam will be like. When students understand what will be asked of them, they will be less anxious and will perform better. At a minimum, make sure students know the format of the exam (type of questions, number of questions of each type, time limit). I recommend that you also give students some sample questions before the test to give them a better understanding of how to prepare.

- Make sure that the content of the exam reflects the content of the course. Students will become very frustrated (justifiably) if you spend three class sessions talking about Karl Marx and then Marx never appears on the test, or, conversely, if there are lots of questions on the test about some topic you barely mentioned (or even worse, didn't mention at all). To make sure that you write a test that evenly and proportionately covers what you actually taught, I recommend sitting down with your class plans from all the sessions that will be covered on the test. Make a list of each lecture topic, each reading assigned for that section of the course, and any other items (e.g., films, or in-class articles) you used. Then, as you write your test items, check off each topic you include. This will help keep you from over- or under-emphasizing any particular topic and will produce a fairer test than you might otherwise have written.

- Exams are tough to write; consider own your fallibility when you look at how the class performed on the exam. There will generally be one or two questions that don't quite work—maybe the wording was too complicated, or maybe the way you phrased the answer choices didn't quite fit with the way the textbook discussed the issue. When I grade exams, I look at the rate of success on each item, and if more than two-thirds of the class missed a particular question, I give the whole class the points back for that item. This policy means a little bonus for those students who did get the question right (since they get the points in their original grade plus the added-on compensation points), and it avoids penalizing other students for what might be a poor question. The policy also helps generate good will, as students appreciate the effort at fairness.

- Deciding when to hand back exams—at the beginning or the end of the class session—is difficult. I have taken both approaches and have sometimes even allowed classes to vote and followed the majority decision. There are costs and benefits to both choices. If you return the exams at the beginning, you avoid the problem of students being antsy for the whole class session wondering about their grades. Further, students who didn't do quite as well as they had hoped may be motivated by the low grade to really focus for the rest of the class. On the other hand, students who do very poorly on the exam may become upset and not be able to focus after getting their exams back, causing them to miss most of what you teach that day. If you return the exams at the end of class, you allow students to be alone with their reactions, whether happiness, sadness, or frustration, and to approach you individually if they choose. However, you may have effectively lost that day's teaching time because students weren't focused enough on the lesson. I recommend trying it both ways and seeing what feels more comfortable to you and how students respond to each approach.

- If you use short-answer or essay questions, consider giving students sample excellent answers when you return the exam. (Remember to remove the authors' names!) This approach has two important benefits. It helps students better understand what they did wrong in their own answers, and it also eliminates some grade complaints (once students see an excellent answer, they may not feel anymore that they have a legitimate complaint about their own grade).

- If students do have a complaint about a test item or how you have evaluated it (for example, they think two answers to a multiple choice question are correct, or they think their essay deserved a higher grade than you gave it), have them present their argument to you in writing. Once you receive a student response, take it with you to review privately and tell the student when to expect your answer. If you try to adjudicate the matter on the spur of the moment, you may not make the best decision. You may feel pressured to give in, or you may feel harried and be unfairly harsh in rejecting the student's position. Asking for the argument in writing gives you more time to evaluate the student's claim. Further, the exercise may resolve the issue on its own—once the student returns to the course materials to prove her point, she may find that she was wrong after all. Or, if the student is right, she has benefited from the process of communicating that to you in a professional manner.

- When much of the class does poorly on an exam (which will often be the case, especially for exams early in the course), consider doing some follow-up work to diagnose the problem. For example, I have given some of my classes short, anonymous surveys on the day I returned exams to ask them how long they studied, how difficult they found the exam, what grade they received, whether they felt they would do better on the next exam, how much of the course reading they had done, and their comments about the exam. I always learn a lot from the students' responses that helps me identify the things I can improve to help them do better, as well as the things I cannot change (e.g., when most of the class says they're too busy with work) and the things I can give guidance on (e.g.,

when most of the class says they studied an hour for a midterm, I can talk about how much study time is necessary to review and master eight weeks of material).

- Before you return an exam, think about whether you will offer any form of extra credit. Exam return day is one of the points in the semester when you are most likely to be asked about extra credit, and it is best to have an answer prepared rather than having to decide on the fly. You might consider offering students the chance to add points back to their exam grades by correcting the items they got wrong; just make sure you spell out clearly what you expect in these corrections and that you design the task so that it requires thought and further review—for example, ask them to explain the correct answer and cite its location in the course material. Or, you can tell students of other extra credit opportunities to come later in the semester, assign optional supplemental work, or inform them that there will not be extra credit. Whatever you choose, it's best to have your answer ready, because the question is inevitable.

Charlie's Suggestions

- I decided years ago that it was pointless to give the traditional 50 (or 75) minute blue-book exam that I had grown accustomed to throughout my undergrad and grad careers, i.e., show up to take an exam knowing what content will be covered but with no real clue about the format of the exam. Even when I gave my students details about the exam format, they floundered miserably on such exams. So I adapted. I still give details about the type of questions on the exam (novaonline.nvcc.edu/eli/evans/his101/details/WEEK7.HTMl#Submit), and I also provide students some examples of good answers (novaonline.nvcc.edu/eli/evans/resources/samples.html), and I let students know the general content origin of the types of questions. My point is that I want students to learn the material; if they learn it this way, then so much the better.

- I have also had to reconsider time constraints. I found that my students came completely unglued with time limits on my exams of either 50 or 75 minutes. This is still the case with my distance learning students. So for my distance learning students, I removed all time limits. I couldn't do that with my campus students, but I did shift some of the exam work out of the classroom, i.e., the major essay became a take-home essay. This meant that the remainder of the exam was easily doable in class (although some students still struggle with it, stretching a fifteen minute undertaking into seventy five minutes).

- Consider your goals for an exam. By making the essay part of the exam a take-home essay with free access to notes, books, resources, friends, I aimed my objective at a student producing an excellent, analytical essay.

- Think carefully about how many points to assign to a particular exam (often it is better to have less points on exams early in the course) and how frequently to give exams. Students both prefer and hate exams. When I ask students on the course evaluation whether they prefer more exams and fewer papers or fewer exams and more papers, a

class will almost always split right down the middle in terms of preference. An instructor needs to decide based on course content and goals and objectives. Since studying history is mostly read, think and respond, it is no surprise that papers work very well instead of exams. Fire science might require immediate application of knowledge, so in-class exams might work best.

- I always hand back exams at the end of class so that I can immediately begin to answer specific questions from students about their grades or my comments after class; other students can leave. I usually offer my general assessment of exam results (along with short explanations of the answers that I was looking for) immediately before handing back exams. I rarely take a lot of class time to deal with exam results or go over answers.

- I am a firm believer that you need to return exams in the very next class after the exam so that you can clear away the rubbish and move on to new material.

- Make sure that your exam reflects the kind of work that you have been doing in class and the content that you have covered. Double-check the questions that you develop to make sure that the answers are somewhere in the textbook or in your class materials. Since I do a lot of document analysis in my classes, the major essay on my exams involves document analysis. If you do a lot of group writing work, then consider group writing work on the exam.

- Finally, I usually include some extra credit question on the exam for those students who were not sleeping during one of the video clips that I showed in class. I do not offer a retake of the exam as there are plenty of extra credit opportunities in my course for students to compensate for a bad exam. I make sure that my syllabus itemizes a number of ways that students can earn extra credit in the course.

Some Additional Online Resources on Exams

- Barbara Gross Davis, *Tools for Teaching*, "Quizzes, Tests, and Exams" (teaching.berkeley.edu/bgd/quizzes.html). Davis offers lots of tips on types of exam questions, how to write high quality exams, and different types of exams you might want to try.

- Barbara Gross Davis, *Tools for Teaching*, "Allaying Students' Anxieties about Tests" (teaching.berkeley.edu/bgd/allay.html). Here, Davis offers suggestions on how to get students ready for the exam, how you can structure your exam and your course to reduce student anxiety, what to do during the exam to reduce student anxiety, how to deal with makeup exams, and what to do when you return exams.

- Berkeley Compendium of Suggestions for Teaching with Excellence, "Giving Exams Demonstrating Student Understanding" (teaching.berkeley.edu/compendium/sectionlists/sect22.html). The site discusses 11 brief suggestions on testing, including allowing students to use note summaries on the exam,

giving study guides, having review sessions before exams, and including questions pitched to a range of difficulty levels.

- Victoria Clegg and William Cashin, "Improving Multiple Choice Tests" (www.idea.ksu.edu/papers/Idea_Paper_16.pdf). This four-page article discusses the pros and cons of multiple choice questions and the different levels of knowledge at which to target your questions. It then offers 34 specific suggestions about writing a high-quality multiple choice test, from which part of the question to write first to how to construct the distractors (the incorrect answers) to how to format the questions on the exam page.

- William Cashin, "Improving Essay Tests" (www.idea.ksu.edu/papers/Idea_Paper_17.pdf). This four-page article, like its companion on multiple choice tests, overviews the pros and cons of this type of test and then offers specific suggestions (25 this time) about essay exams, including when to use essay questions, whether or not you should give students choice of which questions to answer, and techniques to grade the exams fairly.

PART V
IMPROVING YOUR TEACHING

When you first get started teaching, you'll be focused on the nuts and bolts and staying one step ahead of your students. As you get more comfortable, you'll want to think about getting feedback so that you can improve your teaching. Even if you've been teaching for years, there is always room for improvement. Hearing student voices about how they experience your teaching and getting a fresh perspective from colleagues, mentors, and supervisors can help you make those improvements.

CHAPTER 15
GETTING AND INTERPRETING STUDENT EVALUATIONS AND FEEDBACK

When we think of student feedback, we most often think about the end-of-semester course evaluation forms that students rush to fill out in five minutes. In this section, we discuss other ways to get student feedback and, however you get the feedback, how to interpret and make productive use of it.

Jennifer's Suggestions

- First and foremost, I strongly advise doing some form of midterm course evaluation. If you leave student feedback until the end of the course, you can't do anything to improve the things that students point out as problematic. Further, students generally appreciate being asked for their opinions on the course, so the exercise can also help diffuse any frustrations students may have with you and the course. You can make this midterm feedback a simple couple of questions (e.g., What do you like best about the course? What suggestions do you have for improving the course?) or a more detailed worksheet of questions. You don't want to overwhelm them with lots of questions to answer, but do ask about what you want to know.

- Always respond to the feedback students give you. If you collect student comments and never mention it again, students will feel that you don't care about their feedback and will be annoyed that you wasted their time by asking them to fill out the forms. This doesn't mean that you have to agree with the student comments or change the course around to accommodate their complaints. But at the next class session, you should summarize the common points the students made and explain how you are going to respond to them. If you are going to change things based on the feedback, discuss that clearly with the class, and if you are not going to change things, explain your decision so that the students understand why you are "ignoring" their advice. This discussion can also be an opportunity to discuss learning styles—you'll likely get a big range of preferences in the activities students liked and disliked, and if you report to students how this broke down (e.g., "Half of the class said I should use less group work, and the other half said the group work was their favorite part of the class"), it will help them put up with class activities that don't fit their preferred learning style.

- The final course evaluation form provided by NVCC is not very detailed and leaves very little room for students to add their own comments about the course. I recommend that you create your own form (again, this may just involve a few open-ended questions) to

supplement the school's form. This way, you can gather more information to help you assess the students' views on the class and your teaching techniques.

- When you get feedback from students, try to keep it in perspective. If you get a few negative or even nasty comments, pay attention to how much the positive comments outweigh the negative ones. (If the majority of the comments are negative, seek some help interpreting the feedback and improving your teaching, for your own sake and your students'.) At the same time, try not to put too much weight on any one comment. It can be tempting to take one comment that really fits your point of view and run with it, changing something about the class or your approach based on it even though it was just the view of one student among many. You can learn from individual comments, but don't go overboard. Focus instead on the common themes from the class as a whole. And while you do this, remember as well that not all the students will have taken the task seriously, so while the evaluations can give you some insight, they shouldn't be taken as the gospel truth either.

- Whenever you use them, explain to students the value and importance of course evaluations. Tell them why you want their comments and how the information will be used. Don't just hand out the forms and run out of the room; if you don't take the exercise seriously, students won't take it seriously, either. Remember, they are already predisposed not to take evaluation seriously.

- Think about student evaluations and improving your teaching as an ongoing activity rather than a once-a-semester event. Besides doing midterm evaluations, you might try using some of the classroom assessment techniques discussed in Chapter 13 of this book. These activities do not evaluate your teaching directly, but by identifying for you what students do and do not understand from a given lesson, they do help you identify areas you might try to improve.

Charlie's Suggestions

- I second Jennifer's point about creating your own course evaluation form; the college forms tend to be very generalized. (Note that the Humanities division form is different from the one used by the Science division at the Loudoun campus.) On my end-of-semester evaluation form, which I collect from students when they take their final exams, I try to include questions about specific assignments, books, readings or videos that I have used in class. I especially want to ask questions if I have experimented with any new exercise that semester so that I can figure out what to modify. True, I also ask some standard questions about my preparedness for class, but I also include some pointed questions about how the level of student preparation for class and how much students actually worked during the semester. My most recent class evaluation form (I am not completely happy with it) is online at novaonline.nvcc.edu/eli/evans/campus/His101/Evaluation.html.

- Yes, tell the students that these evaluations are important, and that you do use their responses as you prepare for the next class. It might help them take the process seriously.

- In addition to a written evaluation, you should consider some informal monitoring of the class during the semester (I call this a kind of activated, perceptualized feedback; in other words, pay attention to your students). This does not have to be difficult. For example, watch the body language of your students. Are they chatting away merrily as you enter? Are they chatting away merrily while you are teaching? Are they paying attention to you or reading a magazine? Are they sleeping (maybe one student dozing out of 50 isn't too bad, but ten is not good)? Do the students come up with any questions during class? Do some students have questions/issues for you while other students are leaving at the end of class? Do students come prepared for class? Do they sit and stare unblinkingly at you? Do the students make you uncomfortable? By "reading" your students to see how "engaged" they are in the learning process, you can adjust some of your classroom techniques and assignments to perhaps raise their intellectual activity in your class.

- As an instructor, you have got to develop some thick skin. Always remember that your ultimate goal is student success in your course, and if you can change some of your teaching to improve student success, then that is for the better. If something doesn't work, then it is no big deal to make a change. We are not all gifted teachers, we really have to work at it, and so feedback and critiques can help us improve.

Some Additional Resources on Student Feedback

- Michele Marincovich, "Using Midterm Evaluations and Other Forms of Student Feedback on Teaching" (sll.stanford.edu/projects/tomprof/newtomprof/postings/313.html). This short article gives an overview of some of the ways you can gather student feedback on your teaching and discusses six specific guidelines about how to solicit the most useful feedback possible and how to best interpret the feedback you get.

- Barbara Gross Davis, *Tools for Teaching*, "Fast Feedback" (teaching.berkeley.edu/bgd/feedback.html). The first half of this article gives suggestions for asking for student feedback about the class and offers some tips on how to use it. The second half is tips on classroom assessment techniques (see Chapter 13 of this book), which can be an indirect way of getting student feedback on your teaching.

- Berkeley's generic midterm evaluation form (teaching.berkeley.edu/eval.html). You can use this form "as is" to do midterm evaluations in your classes, or just use it for inspiration and modify it to better fit your needs. Also read the associated tips (teaching.berkeley.edu/respond.html) on what to do with the feedback you get from this form.

- Barbara Gross Davis, *Tools for Teaching*, "Student Rating Forms" (teaching.berkeley.edu/bgd/ratingforms.html). Here, Davis deals with the value of end-

of-semester course evaluations, how to design the evaluations, and how to process the results. Some of the things she talks about here are not within your control if you're an adjunct, but it can give you some useful ideas, especially if you want to give students your own evaluation form in addition to the NVCC form.

- Matthew Kaplan et. al., "FAQs about Student Rating Forms: Summary of Research Findings" (www.crlt.umich.edu/tstrategies/studentratingfaq.html). Succinct answers to a few of the questions you may have about the value of student evaluations, including whether they are related to course grades and whether they actually measure the quality of teaching.

- William E. Cashin, "Student Ratings of Teaching: A Summary of the Research" (www.idea.ksu.edu/papers/Idea_Paper_20.pdf). This six-page article reviews the literature on student evaluations of faculty. It won't tell you much about what to do with the feedback you get, but for those who are skeptical about the value of student feedback in the first place, Cashin's article may be an interesting read. Cashin wrote the piece in 1988; he wrote an updated version in 1995 based on the ensuing years of research, available at www.idea.ksu.edu/papers/Idea_Paper_32.pdf.

CHAPTER 16
SOLICITING HELPFUL FEEDBACK FROM COLLEAGUES, MENTORS, AND SUPERVISORS

Colleagues, mentors, and supervisors can be excellent sources of feedback on your teaching. They've all been in your shoes; so they have personal wisdom to share, and they can also bring a fresh perspective to help you understand what's going on in your classroom. Unfortunately, colleagues, mentors, and supervisors can also fail to provide useful feedback or even be detrimental to your teaching improvement. Here are some suggestions about how to ensure that you get the most helpful feedback possible from your fellow faculty.

Jennifer's Suggestions

- Think broadly about ways you can ask for feedback. You can share course documents (syllabi, exams, worksheets, group projects, etc.) with colleagues and ask for their comments. You can simply set up times to meet with a colleague or two to discuss current issues you're facing in your classes. You can ask a colleague to come observe your class and give you feedback on particular issues you're concerned about (or on whatever they notice on their own from watching you and your students interact). You can ask a colleague if you can observe *them* teach or read some of *their* course materials, and use that reading or observation as inspiration for ways you could change your own approach.

- Think carefully about who to ask for feedback. It should be someone you trust and someone you generally get along with. You might want to ask for feedback from someone outside your department to take some of the evaluative edge off.

- Prepare the person you've asked for feedback by discussing ahead of time what aspects of your teaching you would like feedback on. For example, are you concerned about student behavior in class? Do you want feedback on your lecturing style or content? Do you want tips on how you could better lead discussions? These questions will help the person focus on what you want help with and will therefore make it more likely that you get the help you want.

- If you are particularly sensitive to criticism—or even if you're not—consider asking your colleague to give you the feedback in writing. This way, you can receive the feedback privately and you can take the time to mull it over before responding or asking further questions. This extra time can help you avoid becoming defensive, which will help you

maintain collegial relationships and actually benefit from the truth in the colleague's observations.

- If your mentor is not helpful, try being specific about what guidance you would like your mentor to share with you or how much feedback you would like from your mentor. If this doesn't work, seek out other mentors. Just as some people are not good teachers, some people are not good mentors. Even if you must have an official mentor-mentee relationship with a particular person (say, the adjunct coordinator of your discipline), you should focus your energies on interactions with colleagues who can actually help you improve as a teacher. The same can be said for supervisors. Ask for specific feedback, and if you can't get it, maintain whatever relationship you are required to have with the supervisor while finding assistance elsewhere.

Charlie's Suggestions

- Definitely ask your colleagues for advice, suggestions, feedback, etc. At the college, you have other full-time faculty and adjuncts, your discipline coordinator, the division chair, etc. All of these people are more than happy that you are teaching at the college, and all want you to keep teaching at the college—it is too difficult to try and find new instructors. So remember that the suggestions that your colleagues might make to you are intended (hopefully) to make you an even better teacher.

- Do not be afraid to go outside of the college for help. Check with friends or acquaintances at other schools for what they are doing, what works for them, or how they structure their courses. Ask them for feedback on some of your assignments or syllabus. You can also browse online for advice, and there are a number of online discussion groups, such as those run by H-NET www.h-net.msu.edu/, where other instructors can help you with problems or offer specific advice. I have found a relatively current list of online discussion groups at www.mste.uiuc.edu/listservs/subjectsearch.html.

- What to do about a classroom visit? First, discuss the scheduling of it so that it occurs during a class when you will be comfortable. There is no point of a visit just to watch students take an exam. Second, discuss with the visitor his or her role in the class. Do you expect just a simple observation? Should he/she chat with the students? Should he/she exchange comments with you during class? Will the observer stay for the entire class or just a portion? Third, it is sometimes a good idea to talk to your students about the presence of the visitor in the class. You can either do that beforehand or afterwards. (You can explain to your students that we have a collegial atmosphere at the campus in which we take turns visiting each others classes to get new teaching ideas; you do not have to indicate that the class visit is a formal, evaluative process) Finally, it is also a good idea that you determine ahead of time what kind of feedback you expect, written down or just a conversation. Do you want comments on the specific content of the class, on your lecturing style, on an assignment or activity that you used? Classroom visits are not confrontational; they can be useful.

- Look, I think that it is a good strategy to involve your class visitor somehow in the class activities. Most faculty who sit in on a class are used to running a class themselves and they can get antsy (or even worse, bored) if they have to sit still for seventy-five minutes or longer without any activity, maybe just taking some notes. When I have visited classes, even extremely interesting ones, I have found it hard to stay quiet for long periods of time! I would invite an evaluator to say a few words at some point or to join a group discussion—something to keep him/her occupied.

- I almost always ask to review my adjuncts' syllabi before the semester starts; this is part of the evaluation process. That way I can keep all of us operating on roughly the same page with the amount of work that we are requiring, and I can make sure that syllabi meet college requirements. I do not do this or other monitoring of adjunct class assignments to nit-pick, etc., but I do need to ensure that, for example, all students enrolled in His 101 in a given semester receive an equivalent educational experience no matter how many different instructors may be teaching. So, a discipline coordinator is not trying to impose uniformity or to imply that a particular instructor has set a semester schedule up poorly when course materials are being reviewed; just trying to make sure that everyone is playing on the same field.

- From personal experience, as someone who supervises anywhere from two to five adjuncts per semester (sometimes more), I'd like to remind adjuncts that this can be a lot of work, especially when I have to devote a lot of attention to a new adjunct(s) plus my own teaching, etc. I try my best to stay in touch with everyone over the course of the semester but sometimes forget about things. Adjuncts can also initiate questions of their liaison or mentor too, and it helps immensely if adjuncts do stay in touch without my always having to prompt them to see if there are problems.

- We discussed student evaluations in Chapter 15. I also recommend that faculty do a self-evaluation at the end of each semester, while details from the semester are still relatively fresh in their minds. What I usually do is go back over the syllabus, looking at each class and the assignments and self-assessing how well things went. I will usually make changes in the syllabus right then so that I am ready for the next time that I teach the course, or I will make a note on the syllabus, such as "Change this." I will also take a moment to reflect on my general level of preparedness over the semester, level of energy, etc. and any problems that I might have had with students. In other words, I try to give the whole course a "thinking-over." As a discipline coordinator, I also require my adjuncts to do this. I particularly find that this is extremely helpful the first time that you teach something, but it works even if it is the twentieth.

- So far, we have spoken largely about an "unofficial" evaluation process, but there have been some comments that involved the "official" evaluation. There is an official evaluation process at the college, and it is slightly different for full-time and adjunct faculty. Evaluations of full-time faculty are conducted by the division deans (once a semester for the first year, and once a year afterwards). There are forms to fill out, a review of teaching activities, and meetings with the deans. For adjunct faculty, the process is slightly less complicated and extremely variable. The official component of an

adjunct evaluation is the form that is filled out and signed by the discipline coordinator stating whether the adjunct was satisfactory or not satisfactory as an instructor. The discipline coordinator may add a narrative explanation on the form, which is then to be reviewed and signed by the adjunct and forwarded to the division dean for review and a signature. This form is typically filled out and completed after the student evaluations have been done and turned in.

- A discipline coordinator might require other components for an adjunct evaluation, especially if the adjunct is teaching at the college for the first time. Typically, I would require that an adjunct send me at least two drafts of a syllabus so that I can comment on activities and the proposed schedule. I would also visit a class during the semester, and then read the student evaluations. The first semester I would also make a conscious effort to email the adjunct five or six times over the course of the semester to see if there are any problems. Once I have finished the "official form," I would ask an instructor to do a self-reflection on his/her teaching that first semester.

- For adjuncts who have been with the college for some time, I would not necessarily schedule a class visit every semester nor would I stay in as close email, or telephone, contact during a semester. I would still always check a syllabus before the semester starts and then review student evaluations at the end of the semester.

Some Additional Resources on Feedback from Other Faculty

- The University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh, "Faculty Mentoring Resources" (www.uwosh.edu/mentoring/faculty/). The links on this site give a brief overview of the qualities of a good mentor, the responsibilities of a mentee, how the mentor-mentee relationship develops, and what each party should do at different stages of the mentoring process. It can give you some ideas about what to look for in a mentor and what to ask your mentor to do if you want to improve your relationship and get better feedback.

- Michael W. Galbraith, "The Roles and Phases of Mentorship" (sll.stanford.edu/projects/tomprof/newtomprof/postings/224.html). This short article discusses all types of mentoring (including mentoring students), but the phases it describes can still be useful in thinking about the development of your relationship with a mentor.

PART VI
SHARING OUR FAVORITE TEACHING TIPS

Well, after writing all this material, we just could not let it go without coming up with our own top ten lists. Here are some of our favorite tips about teaching.

CHAPTER 17
JENNIFER'S TOP TEN TEACHING TIPS

1. The best piece of teaching advice I got before I began teaching was to expect emotional ups and downs. Some days, you will leave class feeling like you're the best teacher in the world, and some days, you will leave class feeling awful. When the latter happens, try to remember that the feeling will pass and you'll be back to having great classes in no time. (If you're having a longer spell of bad classes, talk to someone for some suggestions for getting back on the right track.)

2. Teach your students life skills, not just disciplinary content. Our students are rarely in our classes because they plan to pursue our field for the next forty years. Keep that in mind and try, at least in small ways, to pass along not only the core ideas of your field, but also the transferable skills and capacities that really make a college education worthwhile—critical thinking, analytical and interpretive skills, reading and writing skills, quantitative skills, interpersonal skills, empathy, and an orientation toward good citizenship.

3. Keep trying new things. Don't allow every class session to be the same boring format, and certainly don't allow your class to be the same boring thing every semester. You'll keep your interest and excitement (and that of your students) much stronger if you keep looking for new ideas and trying new things—find new activities, new texts, new video clips, new topics to cover, new assignments to give. The only caveat is to be sure you don't try too many new things at once. Change only a couple of things at a time to make sure you don't swamp yourself with too much work to enjoy the new things you're trying.

4. Talk to other teachers about your teaching. Use your fellow faculty to commiserate, to get new ideas, and to get feedback about what you're doing. It's always comforting to know that other instructors face the same problems you do and to hear about how they deal with them.

5. See your students as people, not just as students. If you get too far into the "I'm the teacher, you're the student" way of thinking, you will become less understanding, less approachable, and more like a boss than a teacher. You'll also lose a lot of the fun of teaching, which is getting to know the people you're spending the semester with. Try to enjoy your students as individuals rather than getting bogged down in hierarchy, rules, and regulations.

6. Avoid making decisions on the spot. Whether it's a student approaching you after class with a grade complaint, a student asking during class whether you'll offer extra credit, or a student requesting special consideration on a deadline, you will make a fairer decision if you take the time to think about the request outside the student's presence.

7. Don't reinvent the wheel. Whether you're looking for lecture material, discussion questions about a text, ideas for classroom activities, good videos, or guidance on teaching students how to write or how to do derivatives, you can bet that there is already lots of stuff out there. Instead of starting from scratch, do some Google searches, call the Writing Center or the Math Lab, look at some of the resources listed throughout this book, and ask your fellow faculty for ideas. You can save yourself a lot of time and improve the product you give your students by gathering material from other sources and combining it with your own approach.

8. Get feedback from your students throughout the course and in a variety of ways. Use formal anonymous surveys and use short classroom assessments. Ask students questions about class material and activities before class, during class breaks, or when they stop by office hours. The more you understand about how your students think, the better your teaching will be. And the better your teaching is, the more fun teaching will become.

9. Don't feel guilty about not teaching the "right way." For example, I often hear faculty say they feel guilty about showing films in class, because we've somehow learned that showing films is not "real teaching." As far as I'm concerned, the only right way to teach is the way that helps students learn. Do what works, not what you think a good teacher is *supposed* to do.

10. Keep the big picture in mind. On the one hand, this approach takes some of the weight off your shoulders because it reminds you that you can't do it all in this one class, on this one day, or with this one student. On the other hand, the big picture also reminds you how vitally important you are. For many of our students, attending college is a tentative and fragile choice, and how you respond to them and what they experience in your class may make the difference in whether or not they continue and succeed in college. In my view, the best teachers are always grappling with this tension.

CHAPTER 18
CHARLIE'S TEACHING TIPS (IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER)

1. Remember that you know your stuff—i.e., it is you who know the material, and not the students. Be confident that you know what you are teaching when you enter the classroom.

2. Get to know your students. Find out where and how much they are working; where they plan on transferring after NVCC; what their career goals are; what football team they follow. It will help you counsel them on career, academic or personal issues if they ask you later. See Jennifer's #5 above, which also fits with my idea that you should show your students that you are human. Let them know that you would like nothing better than a blizzard to roll into town so that you don't have class on Monday. Let them know that you watch Monday Night football, that you too must drive to campus on Route 7, that you have had trouble reading a certain assignment or remembering certain important historical dates, etc. Class will be a lot more fun.

3. Have fun. Teaching should not always be a chore. I'm guessing that out of forty classes in a semester, you shouldn't have more than two-three "chore" classes that are really difficult for you. This means that humor does have an important place in the classroom. You don't have to be a master jokester; you can smile at some comments; you can point out comic strips, whatever. Have fun.

4. Don't lecture. I think that I said that already, but let me repeat again, DON'T LECTURE. By all means don't read a lecture.

5. Students do not run the show. You run the classroom. It does not have to be an authoritarian dictatorship (sometimes I incline that way), but you have to be in charge. Unfortunately, like it or not, you are the boss. You must nip incessant chatting in the bud. You must have students engaged and paying attention.

6. Don't grade easily; don't feel that you need to be "nice" to students when you grade them. I tell my adjuncts and my students that my history classes are general transfer courses, and that if they transfer to Columbia University, or any other school in the country, then my course is representative of a course at Columbia University. I am not going to have my colleagues remarking that I teach a community college version of Western civilization. I teach a college course with college requirements and expectations; grading will be appropriate. For some reason, adjuncts often are unwilling to flunk students or will go to great lengths to avoid giving failing grades on an

assignment or for a course. Don't worry about failing a deserving student. If there are complaints, they will be handled. Don't worry that students won't sign up for your next class if you grade too difficult.

7. Be adaptable. Let's be realistic about this teaching occupation. Just when you think you have it all figured out, that's when your world will go for a loop. Be flexible; what works one year might not work the next. What works with your 9:30 class might not work with the one at 12:30. What works with one assignment might not work with the next. What works with one student will probably not work with another. So be ready to adapt. Also, you have to be ready if the computer is missing, if the connection to the web is down, if the overhead light bulb burnt out, if your classroom has been flooded, if there is a chemical emergency and the campus is shut down for the week. The best laid plans of mice and men go awry. You have got to be able to move on to a back-up plan. The other case in which adaptability becomes important is when you have planned a specific class activity for a class of 35. When you arrive for class, you have 12 students. After reconsidering your plans for a moment, you still only have 12 students so you go ahead and get everyone working on your activity. Two minutes later a student comes in and wants to get started, then another two students stream in, then three more. Next thing that you know, you now have 26 students. You have got to be able to not miss a beat and keep the class working despite your irritation with the students (some of whom will have good traffic-related excuses as to why they are late).

8. Be realistic about what you hope to achieve in the classroom each day. You are not going to achieve an inter-planetary travel breakthrough. Few of your students have any intention of pursuing a degree in the discipline that you are teaching; so keep that in perspective. Remember the skills that you teach them about intelligent reading, organized writing and critical thinking will last a lot longer than some of the information that you are trying so hard to convey to them. I have no doubt that I cannot do any calculus problem any more, or matrix analysis despite the fact that I had five semesters plus of calculus as an undergraduate. But I think that I still learned something about how to analyze and solve problems from all of those classes. Hopefully, some students will learn something in your class. But you know, it just might not be the content; so don't get hung up on content and covering everything under the sun relevant to your discipline.

9. Make the students do some work. At one point in time, I was constantly exhausted at the end of each class that I taught, while students always seemed refreshed as they left class. I didn't think that was fair, so I decided to even up the equation by making students actually be a part of the class (and work and expend energy) instead of just sitting there listening to me.

10. Student responsibility. Not everything in the classroom is a success. Some students learn, while some don't, but all students must take a big chunk of responsibility for their learning. We can provide students with the tools to learn, show them how to use those tools, and do everything possible to help them with the process. We can constantly work to improve our teaching and design the best possible assignments. We can wield all sorts of active learning activities, try to motivate students, provide the best possible feedback

and be available almost round the clock (via email) to offer advice and support. But in the end, there is a large dose of student responsibility involved in the learning equation. Students must be willing to budget their time, read their materials carefully, pay attention, take notes, actually write their own papers, etc. if they are going to succeed in a course. We were all students once, and we know what kind of decisions we make as students (such as whether to actually work on a paper a week in advance or wait until two hours before it is due). As instructors, you need to recognize that students are partners with you in learning; it can't be just you. The things that we have covered in this handbook are meant to help you make that partnership work.

PART VII
FINDING HELP

Being an adjunct faculty member can be difficult because you are only on campus for a short time; that makes it harder for you to pick up the ins-and-outs of campus bureaucracy and procedures. We hope that this section will help you find quick answers to the many questions that you'll have as you move through the semester—or at least, that you'll find out where to go for those quick answers. First, we share information to help you get settled and accomplish the basics on campus. Then, we describe some of the campus services you may want to use or direct your students to, such as the counseling office and tutoring services. Next, we offer a quick list of who to contact for a range of common questions. Finally, we list some further reading you might want to pursue as you continue to develop your teaching.

CHAPTER 19
BASIC LOGISTICS OF YOUR LIFE AT LOUDOUN CAMPUS

Getting Your Empl ID

There are a lot of numbers in life, and unfortunately the college, too, has its number. In this case, it is your "Empl ID." As soon as you return all of your employment paperwork to your division, the division office manager (Connie Filanowski, cfilanowski@nvcc.edu, for Humanities, or Kate Blair, kblair@nvcc.edu, for Science) will get you entered into the College's record-keeping system, and you will receive your Empl ID. You need your Empl ID before you can get your faculty ID card or your parking sticker, and you will need it to access NovaConnect, the student record-keeping system at the college.

Parking

- When you filled out your employment paperwork, it should have included a form requesting a parking sticker. If you filled this out, the sticker (or stickers, if you requested two) will be sent to your division office and put in your mailbox. If you didn't fill this form out, check with division office staff to get one.

- The parking sticker allows you to park in any faculty/staff lot at any NVCC campus and will last for one academic year. These lots are usually marked with faculty/staff signs, and the parking spots are also often marked "A" (or, at the Annandale campus, also "C"). You can also park in student spots if there are no faculty spots available.

- Your NVCC faculty parking sticker also gives you faculty/staff parking privileges at George Mason University's Fairfax campus. At George Mason, you can park in any faculty/staff parking lot. The lots are labeled as faculty/staff lots with signs at the lot entrances; or, see the GMU website (www.gmu.edu) for a parking lot map.

ID Badge

- In addition to your parking permit, you will need to go to the business office (main floor of the Reynolds building, room 241) and get a faculty/staff photo ID card made. See the business office website (www.nvcc.edu/loudoun/businessoffice/default.htm) for ID badge hours. The staff will take your picture and make the card in a few minutes; they will also provide a lanyard and plastic case to wear the badge around your neck.

- All faculty and staff at the Loudoun campus are expected to wear their badges at all times, both for safety reasons and to help students identify who they can ask for help. You will notice that many, if not most, faculty do not set a very good example in this regard, but wearing the badges remains the official policy. It is an especially good idea to wear it the first few weeks of the semester and also to have it available when you need to deal with the library, the business office, etc.

- Your ID, along with a discount card you can get from the bookstore manager, Jared Prebish (email him at BookstoreLO@nvcc.edu or stop by the bookstore, basement of the Reynolds building, room 111, 703.450.2589) gives you a 10% discount on most merchandise at several local Barnes & Noble bookstores.

NVCC Email Account, LAN Access, Web Space, and Online Course Management

- Along with your employment paperwork, a form will be processed requesting for you an email address and LAN access from the college. Your division staff will process this form for you while they are entering you into the college's record system. The LAN access allows you to log onto any computer on campus. This is especially important so that you can use the computer in your classroom.

- You can check your email from home (or elsewhere) using web-based Outlook. At the NVCC home page, click the "Mail and Web" link below the picture, and follow the instructions for faculty at www.nvcc.edu/ithd/novaweb.html

- If you want to create a course website (besides a Blackboard or Webboard site), you have 3 MB on the college server at your disposal. See loudoun.nvcc.edu/loitm/fac_staff/faculty.htm for information on the address of your space and how to FTP files to the page. You also usually need to contact the college Help Desk at ithelpdesk@nvcc.edu to confirm that your web space has been created. You will use your LAN username and password to upload materials.

- If you want a Blackboard site created for your course, contact Michelle Gee (mgee@nvcc.edu). See our comments in Chapter 5 of the handbook on using Blackboard for online discussions.

- If you want a Webboard created for your course, contact the Loudoun campus IT staff at loitm@nvcc.edu. Again, see our comments in Chapter 5 of the handbook on using Webboard for online discussions.

Audio-Visual and Computer Equipment

- For audio-visual equipment, including learning how to use the equipment already in your classroom, contact Mark Worthington in the IT department (mworthington@nvcc.edu, 703.450.2507, or stop by his office in the Reynolds building room 208).

- All classrooms on the Loudoun campus are equipped with ceiling-mounted projector systems, VCRs, and internet-connected computers (which you can also use to show PowerPoint slides, Word files, and DVDs). Videos and anything you do on the computer will be displayed through the projector system onto a retractable screen hung in the ceiling. Some classrooms also have other equipment, such as overhead projectors. This equipment can also be borrowed for temporary use (see above for AV contact information).

- In almost all the classrooms, this AV equipment and the computer are located in a locked cabinet. You need to get a key from your division. Note that you will need a different key for the cabinets in each building, so be sure to get keys for all the buildings you teach in. Please don't lose the key, and remember to lock the cabinets (there have been a number of thefts of computer equipment over the past year).

- If your class will be held off campus, you may have more limited access to audio-visual equipment. Be sure to check out your classroom in advance and discuss with Mark Worthington the possibility of accessing additional equipment for off-site classes.

Making Copies

- The easiest place to go to make copies is your division office copy room (where you will also find your mailbox).

- If your division office's copier is busy or broken, try the copier of the other division (just down the hall; the Humanities Division office is room 304, and the Science Division office is room 303). If you use the other division's copier, you need to keep track of how many copies you make and record your name, division, and number of copies on the sign-in sheet taped to the top of the copier.

- If neither of these copiers works, you can also try the business office copier, located on the main floor of the Reynolds building to the left of the main library entrance. You will need a copy code (there's one for each division) to use this machine; get the code from your division office staff. This copier is different from the two in the division offices, but instructions for its basic functions are posted on the wall.

NovaConnect

- NOVAConnect (also referred to as PeopleSoft, which is the name of the software), www.nvcc.edu/novaconnect/, is the system we use to manage student data, enrollment, grade entry, and just about everything else. The system is still only a couple of years old, and we've gone though several upgrades during that time, so we're all still getting used to it.

- You'll need to use NovaConnect to monitor your official course roll and to enter grades at the end of the semester. Your division office will have written instructions on the steps required for each task, and office staff should also be able to help you if you have any problems.

- There are also some online instructions for using Novaconnect at www.nvcc.edu/novaconnect/index-faculty.htm.

Finding Teaching Supplies

- For basic supplies (folders, paper, markers for your whiteboard, etc.) go to your division office staff. Don't expect whiteboard markers to always be available in your classroom. Take one or two from the division office and carry them with you to and from class.

- If you will need any special equipment, please let your division staff know well in advance.

Work Space

- There is an adjunct faculty suite on the basement floor of the Reynolds building, around the corner from the cafeteria, in room 114. The room has computers, phones, and desk space and is there for you to work and hold office hours in. You need an access code rather than a key to enter the room; get the access code from your division office.

- You can also work in the faculty/staff lounge, which is often quiet although sometimes hosts parties, book club meetings, etc. This lounge is located directly across the hall from the bookstore (bottom level of the Reynolds building, room 134), around the corner from the adjunct faculty suite. This lounge also requires an access code; get the code from your division office.

- Room 268 in the IT area of the Reynolds building is a third work space option. The room is equipped with about 12 computer work-stations on long tables. It is a good place for two or three instructors to meet and go over materials on computers.

Giving and Scoring a Scantron Test

- Students need to purchase their own scantron forms from the campus bookstore; the forms are not provided by the division. Make sure you remind students several times so they come prepared.

- There is a scantron scoring machine located in the file room of the testing center. Instructions on how to score the exams are posted on the machine.

Attendance, Withdrawing Students, and Giving Incompletes

- The college requires that you take attendance for the first three weeks of classes. At the beginning of the fourth week, it is your responsibility to withdraw any students who are enrolled but who have not yet attended your class. Go to your division office to get a withdraw form (you will need a separate form for each student). For "date last attended," write "never attended." Submit these forms to the division office staff.

- During the first few weeks of class, you also need to monitor your roll to be sure that students who are attending your class are actually registered. The division offices recommend that during these first three weeks, you check your roster on NOVAConnect before each class session so that you can catch enrollment issues immediately. Students who are not registered may have accidentally enrolled in the wrong section or course or may have been dropped from the system for non-payment. Send the student to the Admissions and Records Office (main floor of the Reynolds building across from the main entrance to the library) to sort out the problem if they need help.

- Students may withdraw themselves from your course for a fairly large portion of the semester (check the schedule of classes, or the Working Calendar at www.nvcc.edu/sis/WrkCal/, to find the withdraw deadline for the current semester). After that point, if they withdraw themselves through NOVAConnect, they will receive an F. You can always withdraw a student at any time throughout a semester, and you may get requests from students to do that. Reasons a student might need to withdraw late in the term include changes in work hours, family emergencies requiring the student to leave school, or personal or family illness. If you agree to grant the student a withdrawal, you will need to complete a form from the division office. (Once the form has been processed, you will see a "W" grade appear in your grade entry roster in NovaConnect; you will not need to enter the "W" yourself.) Remember that if you withdraw a student who has been attending your class, you will need to indicate on the form the student's last date of attendance and the reason (from a checklist on the form) for the withdrawal.

- Instructors can award a student the temporary grade of Incomplete. Try not to use this grade, as the incomplete grade requires some very difficult record-keeping. If, for some extenuating reason above and beyond the usual, a student is unable to complete a course by the end of the semester, you can issue the grade of Incomplete. You must fill out an incomplete grade record form with your division staff, which will include detailing the

student's current grade and what assignments the student must still complete. Then you will record the grade of "I" in NovaConnect. Once the grade has been recorded, a student has until the end of the next semester to finish the necessary coursework. So, if you award an "I" grade in December, the student must finish by the end of the spring semester in May. If you award an "I" grade in May or August, the student must finish by the end of the fall semester in December. If a student does not finish, the "I" grade will automatically turn into an "F." Once you have a final grade for a student, your division office staff must change the "I" to the new grade; you cannot do that yourself in NovaConnect. Look, try, try, try not to issue incomplete grades. It is much easier to record a final grade of "F" and then if a student does finish course work, issue a grade change form (also available from your division office) to change the grade.

Final Exam Schedule

- The last week of each term is final exam week, and each class is assigned a 1 hour 50 minute block for its final exam. The schedule is set by each campus and sent to all faculty and staff by email a month or so before the semester starts.

- If you are a new adjunct, you will most likely have missed this email. Ask your division staff or your discipline adjunct coordinator for a copy of the schedule so you know when your final exam(s) will be held.

- Be sure to explain to your students how exam week works. Many students are not familiar with the idea and will need reminders and explanation to ensure that they are aware that final exams may not be held at the regular class meeting time.

Closings for Inclement Weather

- When NVCC will be closed, closing early, or on a delayed opening due to inclement weather, the decision will be broadcast on local news (TV and radio), posted on the NVCC homepage (in the scrolling text on the main page as well as on the weather page—click the "Weather and Closings" link below the picture), and by telephone through NOVAConnect (703.323.3770).

- When we get to the time of year when closings may occur, make sure your students know how to get closing information. Also make sure that they know that they must look for information about NVCC specifically; NVCC makes its decision separately from the local public school districts. Also make sure students know how early closings and late openings work (read the information on the Weather and Closings page, www.nvcc.edu/depts/homepage/closing.htm, to understand it yourself). Students often do not understand, for example, that if we open at 10 AM, they are not expected to be in class for the last half of a 9:30-10:45 AM class; they should only attend classes that start after the opening time.

- Off-campus classes are sometimes an exception. If you are teaching off campus in a Loudoun County public school and/or a Fairfax County public school and that school system is closed, then your class will be cancelled.

- Some faculty try to make their own policies on closings and class cancellations (for example, ignoring the college policy, some faculty tell students that they will not hold class if Loudoun County Public Schools are closed). Please do not do this. Whether we agree with the college's decisions on closings or not, when individual faculty make their own alternate policies about when class will or will not be cancelled, it causes confusion for our students.

- You may find that on some days when the college stays open, the weather in Loudoun is pretty bad (decisions are made from Annandale, where the weather is usually less severe), and on these days, you may come to class and find that only a handful of students have made it. Use your best judgment about what to do in this case. You might bring an alternative activity to engage the students who have made their way to campus, or choose to go ahead with class as planned, or choose to cancel class in order to avoid leaving much of the class behind. Do what you feel is best for the students who are there, the students who haven't made it (many of whom are coming from rural areas and will find winter travel difficult or impossible), and the progress of the class as a whole.

Finding a Substitute Instructor

- If you have an emergency or other situation that will prevent you from holding your class as scheduled, contact your discipline's adjunct coordinator about finding a substitute. Try to do this as early as possible so that some solution can be found. Do not just send your own substitute without approval from the coordinator or other administrator.

- Also, do not expect your division office staff or the testing center to be able to cover for you.

Procedures for Collecting End-of-Semester Student Evaluations

- New adjunct instructors will do student evaluations of their course(s) the first semester they are teaching. Returning adjunct instructors will usually do student evaluations once a year. You are always welcome and encouraged to collect additional student evaluations for your own use; this evaluation schedule is just the minimum requirement.

- The evaluation forms will usually be placed in an instructor's mailbox a few weeks before the end of the semester. You should take about ten to fifteen minutes in class for students to complete the evaluations. While students complete the evaluations, you must wait outside the classroom; before you leave, select a student who will collect the evaluations, put them in an inter-office envelope, and take them to your division office.

- The evaluations are first reviewed by your discipline coordinator, who then fills out an evaluation form assessing your work. The student evaluations are then returned to you with your coordinator's evaluation form for you to sign.

- Please see Chapters 15 and 16 of this book for information about conducting your own course evaluation and getting feedback from your discipline coordinator and other supervisors.

Procedures for Field Trips and Guest Speakers

- Field trips are, in theory, encouraged by the college. They can be optional or required in a course. You first need to complete an NVCC Form 125-81 (Field Trip/Course Request for Approval) and give it to your division dean for his/her approval. (The form will later be passed on to the Provost for his approval.) Beyond that, you need each student to complete the Student Assumption of Risk Certificate (NVCC 125-152). All of this is in the official college adjunct handbook (www.nvcc.edu/resources/adjhandbook/adjunct2004-05.pdf), and your division staff can help you with it as well. Please allow enough time for all of these procedures to be followed.

- Guest speakers are much easier to arrange. Just let your discipline coordinator or dean know the details about your speaker. If the speaker charges no fee, this approval is all that you need. If a fee is involved, you will need approval from the dean and you will need to complete several pieces of paperwork. A 105-33 form will need to be filled out that notes the speaker's fee and the budgetary code (which indicates the source of the money) to pay that speaker. Usually, the money comes from the discipline budget for the year. Once the speaker has spoken, you need to have him/her fill out and sign another form (105-133, Request for Payment of a Guest Speaker) to actually have payment processed. Reimbursing your speaker for travel expenses requires yet another form.

Communicating with Students and Your Division

- For contact with students, adjuncts can have a college voice mailbox set up. Contact Loudoun IT support (loitm@nvcc.edu). Instructions for accessing that voice mailbox are online at loudoun.nvcc.edu/loitm/voicemail_info.htm. You can also set up the voicemail so that your voice messages are delivered to you by email as *.wav files.

- Check your official college email. Students will send you things there, but also, important (and non-important) official college announcements will be sent there. If you wish, you can also have students use another email to contact you, but you should still monitor your NVCC email regularly to be sure that you don't miss any important notices about NOVAConnect or other college business.

- Students will also often leave you messages at the division office, so you should regularly check your mailbox on campus. (We realize that this is a bit difficult if you only teach at an off-campus location. In that case, it is especially important that you have some other way for students and staff to get messages to you.) While you are on campus, look around for notices posted in the division mailrooms about important dates and procedure changes. College and campus activities are also regularly announced in two newsletters, *Intercom* (for the entire college; www.nvcc.edu/pip/intercom.htm) and the *Loudoun Lowdown* (for the Loudoun campus; www.nvcc.edu/loudoun/provost/newsletter.htm). Both newsletters are distributed by email, so you should receive a copy each week at your college email address.

- Please remember that it is important to keep in contact not only with your students but also with your discipline coordinator and division staff. It is a good idea to keep them apprised of your courses, problems, etc. From a coordinator's point of view, it does get a little old to keep prompting adjuncts about how their courses are going or if there are problems. Charlie has had, in the past, instances of adjuncts not using the computer in their classroom because the login wouldn't work or because of inoperable equipment (this can especially be a problem if you are off campus). Remember to speak up so that problems can be fixed.

CHAPTER 20
CAMPUS RESOURCES TO ASSIST YOU AND YOUR STUDENTS

The Library

- Getting materials from other NVCC campuses: If you find materials in the library catalog (online at vccslinc.vccs.edu/F/?func=find-b-0&local_base=nvcc) held by another NVCC campus library, you can have them sent to our campus fairly quickly (usually in just 2 or 3 days). Go to the circulation desk (upstairs) and find the inter-campus loan request form, a small slip of white paper usually stacked somewhere on the circulation desk counter. You'll need to fill out your name and contact information, the call number, author, title, and what campus (or campuses) hold the item. Give your form to whoever is staffing the circulation desk. Depending on who is at the desk when your item arrives, you may receive an email notification, or the librarian may just put the item in your mailbox.

- Getting materials from other colleges: If you want a book or video not held by NVCC, you can request the item through inter-library loan. You must submit these requests to Jennifer Reynolds (jereynolds@nvcc.edu), who you can usually find at the library help desk (downstairs near the student computer area). The time necessary to receive these items will vary based on where Jennifer can find them, so discuss your timeline with her to see if your request is reasonable.

- Borrowing from George Mason University: Once you have your NVCC faculty ID card, you also have borrowing privileges at George Mason. (Your NVCC faculty parking sticker also gives you parking privileges at George Mason. See "Parking," Chapter 19.)

- Putting materials on reserve: If you want to put materials on reserve for your class to use (extra copies of the textbooks, primary materials they must look at, etc.), bring your materials to the circulation desk. Note that there is not much room for storing reserve items, so only put what is necessary on reserve. You will also need to decide on what type of reserve rules to use (can students only use the materials in the library? Take them home overnight? etc.). The library staff can explain your reserve options.

- Finding videos: Note that videos are listed in the library catalog along with books and (at the Loudoun campus, although this is not the case at all NVCC campuses) shelved in the stacks with the books as well. When you search the catalog, videos will be marked with "[videorecording]" after the title.

- Using library databases from on or off campus: You and your students can access library databases to use journal, newspaper, or magazine articles from off campus by logging in to the system. Instructions for both faculty and student logins can be found here: www.nvcc.edu/Library/proxy/. On campus, you will be granted automatic access to the databases—no login necessary. Take some time to explore the databases we have—they are really quite powerful. Visit www.nvcc.edu/library/ and choose "Magazines, Newspapers, and Reference Databases" to see the list. The Opposing Viewpoints database is a great source for student research on current issues and a good place to find basic facts and statistics for lecture preparation; the Issues and Controversies on File database offers similar materials. The CQ Researcher is useful if you need information on current political issues and legislation. OneFile, Expanded Academic, and Proquest are all databases covering a large number of academic journals. As you will see on this page, you can also search for databases by discipline as well as search for a particular publication in an alphabetical list. You, or your students, can get help using the library databases from one of the campus reference librarians.

- Library tours: If your students will be doing library research, you may want to schedule a library tour for your class. The librarian will show the students where to find print and online resources related to your discipline and the specific assignment. Speak with anyone at the help desk on the main floor of the library (near the student computer area) or contact Jennifer Reynolds (jereynolds@nvcc.edu). Sometimes it is also possible to have a librarian visit your class to discuss specific materials for one of your assignments.

The Testing Center

- If you need to give students makeup exams, the testing center will proctor the exam for you in most cases. The testing center (www.nvcc.edu/loudoun/testing_center/home.htm) is located on the main floor of the Reynolds building, to the right of the main library entrance, in room 251. Note that the center is for individual exam make-ups, not for an entire class.

- To use the center, take a copy of your exam to the center and fill out a Makeup Exam Request Form. You'll find a big stack of the forms in the file room inside the testing center, or if you prefer, print and complete a copy ahead of time (www.nvcc.edu/loudoun/testing_center/Instructor_Aides/Makeup_Test_Request.doc). You will need to fill out your name, course name, student's name, and details about the test (time limit, whether the student can use a calculator or other materials, etc.). You must also write your name and the student's name on the test itself. Paperclip the form to the test and take it to a testing center staff member, who will check that the form is completed correctly and sign off on it. The staff member will then file the test in your folder so that they can find it when the student comes to take the test. Never file the test yourself; it must have a staff member's signature first.

- The first time you use the center, the staff will need to make hanging folders for you. After that, you'll find in the alphabetized cabinet a hanging folder with your name, and

inside it, folders for each course you have filed makeup exams for as well as a folder for completed exams. When you believe the student has taken the exam, you can stop back in any time and take the completed exam from your file.

- The testing center also handles all testing for students who need testing accommodations due to disabilities, distance learning testing, and testing for placement in math, English, and ESL courses. As a result, they are particularly busy at final exam time, so they serve only these groups after a certain point in the semester. Keep track of this; you may end up having to proctor a makeup exam yourself or give the student an incomplete and have them take the exam after the restriction is lifted.

- If you have a student with disabilities who needs a testing accommodation for all exams, this student can take exams in the testing center at any time of the semester. For most of the semester, you can just submit the test with the normal Makeup Exam form. But during the restricted periods, you must fill out a special form, the ADA Special Permission Form, available in the testing center file room or online (www.nvcc.edu/loudoun/testing_center/Instructor_Aides/ADA_Special_Permission_Slip.doc). You must attach to this form a copy of the student's accommodations request form from the counseling center (see more on this below) to prove to the testing center that this student may use the center during the restricted time period.

- Make sure your students know the rules and hours of the testing center. In particular, note that children may not be brought to the testing center, that students must present photo ID to take their exams, and that students must leave a certain required window of time before closing time in order to take an exam. See the testing center's website for hours (www.nvcc.edu/loudoun/testing_center/home.htm).

The Counseling Office

- The counseling office is located on the main floor of the Reynolds building in room 253. Direct students to the counseling office if they have questions you can't answer about transfer credits, career options, course placement, progress toward their degrees, applying to other colleges, getting documentation of a learning or other disability requiring classroom accommodations, or other academic and career matters. Counselors can also provide some services, as well as referrals, in helping students deal with personal problems. See the counseling office web site (www.nvcc.edu/loudoun/studserv/counseling/default.htm) for more information.

- Counselors also teach our student development courses, which focus on orienting students to college and teaching them good study skills. If you are looking for ways to help your students develop these skills, consider contacting a member of the counseling staff for handouts or websites you might use.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

- If a student approaches you for accommodations in testing or other classroom activities, you must receive a copy of their official accommodations form from the counseling staff before you may give them any accommodations. (Lawsuits may result if you accommodate students without proper documentation. Always wait for the official form.)

- The accommodations form will detail the student's strengths and weaknesses and will suggest the types of accommodations that might be helpful. Depending on the course, your teaching style, and the student's preferences, you often will only use one or two of the suggested accommodations. Discuss with the student what accommodations s/he wants, and then discuss how you'll accomplish those accommodations.

- The most common type of accommodation you'll need to make will be changes to testing (usually extra time or allowing students to type their answers rather than handwrite them). See the above section on the testing center for information about submitting exams to be proctored. You'll just use the standard makeup exam request form when you submit your exams for students with disabilities; just make sure you make the proper changes to time limits, etc. according to the agreements you've made with the student. You do not need to provide documentation of the student's disability to the testing center unless the test will occur during the restricted final exam period. If the student will type her or his answers, be specific about how—for example, state that the student may type answers in WordPad if you want to be sure the student cannot use spell check or thesaurus help; if you don't mind the use of this help (or if the student's accommodations allow for spelling assistance), suggest Word.

- Note that you are required by law to make reasonable accommodations, but you are not required to make accommodations that you believe would fundamentally undermine the requirements of the course. (For example, an English instructor would not have to agree to waive a student's writing requirements because of the writing difficulties of a disabled student, because writing skills are the central focus on the course.) If you believe that the accommodations suggested on the form would not be reasonable in your case, speak with Carlita McCombs (see below).

- For any questions about accommodations, contact Carlita McCombs, our disability services counselor (cmccombs@nvcc.edu or 703.450.2571).

The Writing Center

- The writing center is located on the main floor of the Reynolds building in room 250 and has a website with useful resources for faculty and students at www.nvcc.edu/loudoun/english/WritingCenter/default.htm. Check the website (or contact Jeremy Ruane at jruane@nvcc.edu) for details about the center's services as well as handouts and links that can help you guide your students toward better writing.

- The writing center can help students at various stages of their writing and is a place to consider sending students facing writing challenges. Writing center faculty and peer tutors are trained to help students with writing, so this may be more productive than working with the students yourself.

- Usually when a student goes to the Writing Center for help, the center will fill out a sheet letting you know the student was there. If you recommend that students actively use the center, then it is a good idea to give the center a copy of your syllabus or assignment instructions so that the staff have that information when working with your students.

The Math Lab

- The math lab is located in the Reynolds building, room 204. Read about its services at the lab's website at www.nvcc.edu/loudoun/math_lab/. The math lab's website also includes links to other math materials, including information about the math placement test, links to the websites of all the math faculty, and information about taking self-paced math courses.

- The math lab offers students considerable resources to help them understand math, including lots of videos and DVDs on math topics and help from math lab staff. If your students want further help, see the information, below, about free tutoring.

Loudoun Campus Tutoring Services

- NVCC offers every student 20 hours of free tutoring, but many students are not aware of this service. When you see students struggling, encourage them to take advantage of the opportunity. Students can sign up for this tutoring by filling out the Request for Tutoring Application form available at www.nvcc.edu/loudoun/studserv/tutorial_services/default.htm. Students should submit this form to Clint Young in the student services office (Reynolds Building, room 242).

- If you have questions about our tutoring services, contact Clint Young, Tutorial Services Coordinator (joyoung@nvcc.edu or 703.450.2537).

Computer Labs

- The campus has both PC and Mac labs. The PC lab is located in the Waddell building, room 230, and the Mac lab is located in the Waddell building, Room 208. The labs offer students a place to work on basic computer applications (word processing, internet) as well as more advanced software like Java or Visual Basic. For more information about the PC lab, contact Zoe Sowers or Laurie Mergler (see below). For more information about the Mac lab, contact Miguel De Angel (mdeangel@nvcc.edu, 703.450.2568).

- There are some computer classrooms located in the Waddell building that are sometimes available if you want to schedule one or two class sessions per semester in a computer lab setting. Contact Zoe Sowers (zsowers@nvcc.edu, 703.450.2521) or Laurie Mergler (lmergler@nvcc.edu, 703.450.2521) about this possibility. Computer lab staff are also sometimes available to come to your class if you want someone to explain college email or other computer topics to your students.

CHAPTER 21
QUICK LIST: WHO DO I TALK TO ABOUT…?

Advising, including student transfer or program/degree requirements? Counseling office (703.450.2571, LR 253)

Audio-visual equipment? Mark Worthington (mworthington@nvcc.edu, 703.450.2507, LR 208)

Behavior problem in class? Your discipline's adjunct coordinator, then your division dean

Computer questions? NVCC IT help desk (www.nvcc.edu/ithd/, ithelpdesk@nvcc.edu, 703.426.4141 Option 1) or Loudoun campus IT staff (loitm@nvcc.edu, 703.450.2569 or 703.450.2660)

Crime on campus? Campus police (LR 267A, 703.450.2540 or 703.409.2637)

Disability Accomodations? Carlita McCombs (cmccombs@nvcc.edu, 703.450.2571, LR 253)

Email directory? To find faculty email addresses and phone numbers, go to the directory at www.nvcc.edu/phone/a2z/

Grade Entry Questions? Your division office staff

Intercampus loan (loan from another NVCC campus)? Staff at library circulation desk, top floor of library

Intercom is the college's weekly newspaper; read it at www.nvcc.edu/pip/intercom.htm.

Interlibrary loan (loan from another college)? Jennifer Reynolds (jereynolds@nvcc.edu, LR 249D, 703.450.2642)

Loudoun campus news? Read the *Loudoun Lowdown* at www.nvcc.edu/loudoun/provost/newsletter.htm.

Makeup Exams? Testing Center (LR 251, 703.450.2508)

NOVAConnect issues? www.nvcc.edu/novaconnect/ (The informational tutorial is at

www.nvcc.edu/novaconnect/index-faculty.htm.) Contact the Help Desk, ithelpdesk@nvcc.edu, or your division office staff for help. Also, check Instructions for Entering Grades on NOVAConnect (www.nvcc.edu/loudoun/fac_resources/InstructionsEnteringGrades.doc).

Off-campus teaching issues? Currently, the campus offers classes at several off-campus sites. The location of these classes is always changing, and the availability of AV resources changes too. You need to contact your division for exact information. Mark Worthington, mworthington@nvcc.edu, can tell you about AV equipment. The new Reston Center is staffed on a part-time basis (703.948.7710). Maps to the off-campus locations are at www.nvcc.edu/loudoun/directions/default.htm.

Parking? Parking Services (Melissa Coppola, mcoppola@nvcc.edu, LR 267A, 703.450.2523)

Paychecks? Check with your division office staff, but you will probably end up talking to the payroll office handling Loudoun adjuncts, 703.323.4276.

Registration problems? Admissions and Records (LR 246, 703.450.2501)

Reston Center issues? Call 703.948.7710.

Salary and Promotion Issues? Discuss first with your discipline liaison, then office manager and/or division dean. There are specific requirements for promotion. Yes, adjunct faculty can be promoted too—maybe advanced is a better word—based on teaching experience and educational degree. The official pay scale is included online in the official adjunct faculty handbook, www.nvcc.edu/resources/adjhandbook/adjunct2004-05.pdf (need a fast internet connection to view).

Snow Closings? Look for announcements on local news stations, check the college's weather closings page (www.nvcc.edu/depts/homepage/closing.htm), or call NOVAConnect (703.323.3770)

Student Activities? Liz Brashear (cbrashear@nvcc.edu, 703.450.2616, LR 131)

Supplies (classroom/office)? Your division office staff

Teaching suggestions, problems or advice? This book, the book's companion website (www.nvcc.edu/loudoun/PP/pedagogy.html), your discipline's adjunct coordinator, Charlie Evans (cevans@nvcc.edu, 703.450.2520, LR 308) or Jennifer Lerner (jlerner@nvcc.edu, 703.450.2514, LR 312)

Telephone Directory? To find faculty email addresses and phone numbers, go to the directory at www.nvcc.edu/phone/a2z/

Textbooks? Either your division office staff member in charge of book orders (for Humanities,

Beverly Ellerbe, bellerbe@nvcc.edu, LR 304, 703.450.2505; for Science, Pixie Calderwood, pcalderwood@nvcc.edu, LR 303, 703.450.2575), or campus bookstore (BookstoreLO@nvcc.edu, LR 111, 703.450.2589)

Transfer issues? Counseling office (703.450.2571, LR 253)

Tutoring? Clint Young (joyoung@nvcc.edu, 703.450.2537, LR 242)

CHAPTER 22
A FEW MORE RESOURCES

Reading about Adjuncting and Other Aspects of Higher Education

- Adjunct Nation (www.adjunctnation.com) is the website of the magazine *Adjunct Advocate*. There, you can read some of the magazine's contents, which include news and opinion pieces, book reviews, and feature articles about all aspects of adjunct work. The site also offers a message board, job listing sources and job hunting tips, and links to websites on topics from teaching techniques to money management.

- *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (www.chronicle.com) is probably the most widely read publication in higher education. It includes news items on higher education issues, features about prominent debates and new books from a range of disciplines, opinion columns about life as a faculty member, administrator, or job seeker, extensive job listings, and tips on career advancement, teaching, and publishing. NVCC subscribes to the *Chronicle*. To get your login and password to access the full contents of the paper online, contact Jennifer Reynolds (jereynolds@nvcc.edu).

Suggested Reading on Teaching Techniques

- Wilbert McKeachie, *Teaching Tips: Strategies, Theories, and Research for College and University Teachers*. McKeachie's text is a classic (now in its eleventh edition) because it offers a huge amount of practical advice on every aspect of teaching. It is also a great reference because it is clearly organized into well-labeled chapters and sub-topics to allow you to quickly find suggestions on whatever aspect of your teaching you are interested in at that time.

- Thomas Angelo and K. Patricia Cross, *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers*. If you want to learn more about assessing student learning (see Chapter 13 of this book for more on classroom assessment), this book is a great resource. It can also give you some ideas for small group exercises and for active learning activities. The bulk of the book is the straightforward and brief description of several dozen exercises you might try, ranging from simple two-minute activities to semester-long projects. Each exercise is explained along with its strengths and weaknesses, variations you might try, and examples of how the exercise has been used in particular classrooms.

- Tomorrow's Professor E-newsletter (to read archived newsletters organized by topic, go to ctl.stanford.edu/Tomprof/postings.html; for information on subscribing, go to ctl.stanford.edu/Tomprof/index.shtml). This newsletter was originally aimed at science and technology faculty, but it is so widely read now that its articles are almost always relevant across the disciplines. Twice a week, newsletter creator/manager Rick Reis sends an excerpt of about 800 words about some aspect of teaching, from teaching techniques to research, mentoring, or the future of the academy. He always identifies the source of the excerpt (usually some new book on the given topic), so you can pursue the work further if you're interested. The list is a great way to remind yourself to keep thinking about your teaching, since it pops up in your inbox every few days and the articles are short enough that you can actually make time to read them at least some of the time.

- Journals and newsletters on teaching: *College Teaching*, *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching*, *The Teaching Professor*, *Inventio: Journal of Creative Thinking about Learning and Teaching*, *National Teaching and Learning Forum*, *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, disciplinary teaching journals (e.g., *Teaching Sociology* or *Teaching Mathematics and its Applications*).

Reading on Teaching Critical Thinking

- Cindy L. Lynch and Susan K. Wolcott, "Helping Your Students Develop Critical Thinking Skills" (www.idea.ksu.edu/papers/Idea_Paper_37.pdf), focuses on critical thinking as good problem-solving skills that can be applied to disciplinary questions, career goals, and civic involvement. The six-page article outlines several common stages in students' development of their thinking skills and discusses how to design course activities to address these stages and help students improve their problem-solving skills.

- Marva A. Barnett, "Promoting Students' Intellectual Growth" (trc.virginia.edu/Publications/Teaching_Concerns/Fall_2000/TC_Fall_2000_Barnett.htm). In this short article, Barnett discusses the thinking skills students commonly bring to the classroom, why we want to improve those thinking skills, and concrete ways you can model and teach better critical thinking in your classes. She also includes a bibliography with some additional sources you might want to pursue.

- Mike Font, Gena Todd, and Barbara Welch, "Critical Thinking: Approaches" (www.nyu.edu/cte/tctstud.html). This piece discusses what critical thinking means and lays out several typologies defining the different traits of intellectual thought, different types of questions, etc. It also discusses how to evaluate student thinking and how to create writing assignments that foster critical thinking and offers a bibliography of further sources.

CONCLUDING REMARKS ABOUT PROJECT PEDAGOGY

As we noted in the Introduction, this book grew out of our pilot project at the Loudoun campus to provide pedagogical training to newly-hired full-time faculty. Since both of us also work closely with adjunct instructors, we wanted to help give them access to the same pedagogical advice we were offering new full-time faculty, and to offer them some additional resources as well. Here, we each wanted to offer a few concluding remarks about the project, this book, and teaching.

From Jennifer

I am still a new teacher, beginning my third year as a full-time faculty member at the Loudoun campus as you read these words. I consider myself lucky to have attended graduate school at the University of Michigan—the home of the nation's first teaching center—because it gave me the opportunity to explore the research on teaching and learning while I tested the waters as a teaching assistant. I have been experimenting with my teaching since my first day in the classroom, when I tried the "most important points" CAT I described in Chapter 13 and immediately knew I was hooked. But I think I learned the most about teaching from my dissertation research, in which I spent a year in three other teachers' classrooms, observing them and interviewing their students about college and effective teaching and learning. I have tried to share some of what I've learned from all of these sources in this book.

I hope that the book will offer everyone who reads it something useful, whether it is a new teaching idea to try, a website or book to explore, or even a suggestion that annoys you so much that you are prompted to discuss it with a colleague. We each bring a different teaching philosophy, our own unique personality, and the particularities of our discipline to the classroom, but I believe that our individual styles are enriched when we engage in a dialogue with others about teaching.

That said, I want to again welcome your comments, questions, and even complaints about the book. I also want to reiterate our offer, made more subtly in Chapter 21, to please see both of us as a resource, if you think it would be useful, for talking over a teaching problem, observing your class and offering feedback, inviting you into our classrooms, or helping you find whatever other teaching resources you need. I hope to hear from many of you over the course of the year. I know that I still have much to learn about teaching, and I look forward to discussions with my colleagues to help me do so.

From Charlie

I would like to repeat that, as we wrote in the introduction, what we have written here is not only directed at teaching in some courses in the humanities. With a bit of adaptation, most of the suggestions in this handbook can be applied in teaching any discipline, whether horticulture, history or graphic design; you just have to be creative about it.

I would like you all to know that I don't hold it against Jennifer that she attended/is attending UM (big football rival of Notre Dame) for her graduate degrees. In fact, it is only relatively recently that most colleges/universities have begun to pay attention to the craft of teaching. That can only be for the better.

I'd also like to emphasize how important communication is to our task of teaching, not only clear communication of information and skills to our students but also the need to stay in contact with our peers, colleagues, mentors, coordinators, deans, and division and campus staff. The whole process of higher education works much better when we are all cooperating together in the task of educating our students.

Finally, you have got to believe that I am no expert at this whole "teaching" process even though I have been at it in one form or another since my graduate school years way back in the distant eighties. I am far from being a teaching expert with any semblance of formal pedagogical training; and I have often viewed with suspicion those who taught pedagogical theory or wrote such books. I've probably disregarded just about everything that I have written here at one time or another. I've had terrible classes, terrible students, terrible assignments (try assigning Plato's *Republic* to a freshman survey class and see what that gets you!), and have been a terrible instructor at least on some occasions, but teaching is a learning experience, as much for my students as it is for me. I'm always learning new things about how I can teach something better. Hopefully, this handbook will help me (and others) in that regard.