

# Extending a Hand to Help Troubled Students

A good student starts missing class or gets unaccountably testy, either with the instructor or with other students. Written work loses quality and focus. Sometimes the student's contribution to classroom discussions actually loses coherence. What's going on here?

Such behavior might be only a response to common stresses of college life and work, like a night without sleep, conflict with a partner or a looming term paper deadline. But it may also be a sign of burgeoning emotional problems that are more serious, Dr. John Guthman, director of Student Counseling Services, told faculty members at a pair of round-table



Faculty members may be in the best position to spot worrisome changes in students' behavior, Dr. John Guthman says.

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sessions sponsored by the Center for Teaching and Scholarly Excellence.

He said it might be appropriate for a faculty member who sees signs of trouble to "take the student aside, perhaps after class, and ask: 'What's going on? This isn't like you.' In some cases, it will be helpful to suggest that the student think about talking with a member of the counseling staff."

In cases that appear to be more serious or getting worse, the faculty member can call Dr. Guthman's office and ask Counseling Services to make an outreach contact with the student.

Teaching faculty are certainly not mental health professionals and aren't expected to perform the duties of a counselor, Dr. Guthman said. But they are in many ways uniquely positioned to spot students' emotional problems. Faculty typically see students two or three times a week, more often than other professionals on campus, he said.

Further, faculty assess how students are functioning academically during the course of a semester and may be able to spot significant changes in how well a student is thinking. Faculty are present during times of academic stress. "Sometimes,

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# You Did the Teaching. Did They Do the Learning?

To the uninitiated, “outcomes assessment” sounds like one of those academic terms that would be meaningful if it were in your discipline, but if it isn’t – well, write it off as jargon and move on. But outcomes assessment is on many people’s minds at Hofstra and elsewhere this year and will be much talked about in coming months.

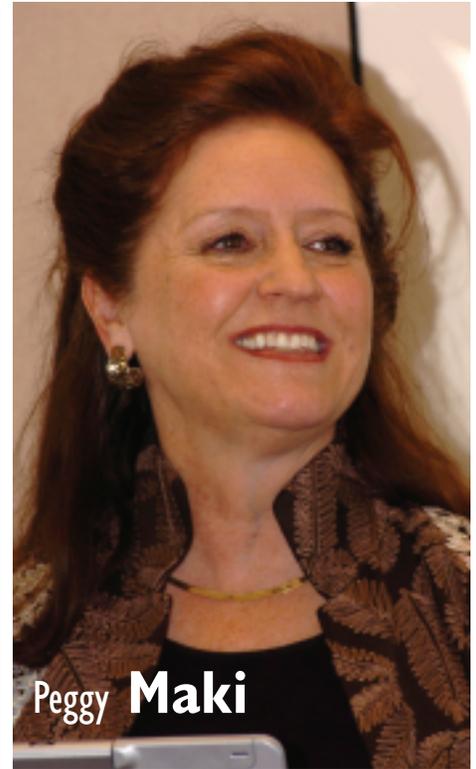
The administration has been promoting work on quality outcomes assessment for years – think of it as a really thoughtful and comprehensive testing system – but it is giving the issue new emphasis as part of the next self-study for reaccreditation.

That self-study will be undertaken in 2008-09, with full reaccreditation sought five years later from the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, the accrediting body for New York and surrounding states. Hofstra was last reaccredited in 2004.

To help usher in a new era of outcomes assessment, the University and the Center for Teaching and Scholarly Excellence brought Dr. Peggy Maki, a national expert on outcomes assessment, to campus in March for a day of presentations to faculty and administrators.

She said the concept was not all that mysterious – it boils down to “what do you want your students to know and how do you figure out how to tell if they’ve learned it?”

Dr. Maki conceded that preparing outcomes assessment reports could seem like busy work for university administrators, who might produce them with minimal effort and let them gather dust on shelves. But if a university and its faculty take the outcomes assessment issue seriously, she said, that process can change the whole campus and greatly increase what students take away from the college years beyond their diplomas.



Dr. Peggy Maki recently conducted sessions at Hofstra on the concept of “outcomes assessment.”

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Provost Herman Berliner, Associate Provost Liora Schmelkin and Ralph Polimeni, Dean of the Zarb School of Business (front row, right to left), were among nearly 50 faculty, administrators and professional staff learning about “outcomes assessment” as part of Hofstra’s next self-study for accreditation.

# United They Stand: Pulling Together in a Group

## A Teaching Leave Lecture on Student Work Teams

*Each year, the University grants several sabbatical leaves to faculty for projects that deal specifically with pedagogical issues. These Special Teaching Leaves provide faculty members time away from regular responsibilities to develop ideas and methods to enhance teaching excellence. The CTSE reviews applications each fall and makes recommendations to the Senate Faculty Affairs Committee for choosing recipients of the Special Teaching Leaves. Recognizing the tremendous breadth of insight, innovation and research that may be stimulated during a teaching leave, the CTSE does not limit applications to any particular topic or field. Faculty may, for example, use the time to investigate larger pedagogical theories, devise instructional methods, or study problems and crises in education. To date, 34 faculty members have been awarded Special Teaching Leaves. Each fall, the Special Teaching Leave recipients from the prior year are showcased in a presentation titled “Program on Scholarship in Teaching,” to which all faculty and administrators are invited.*

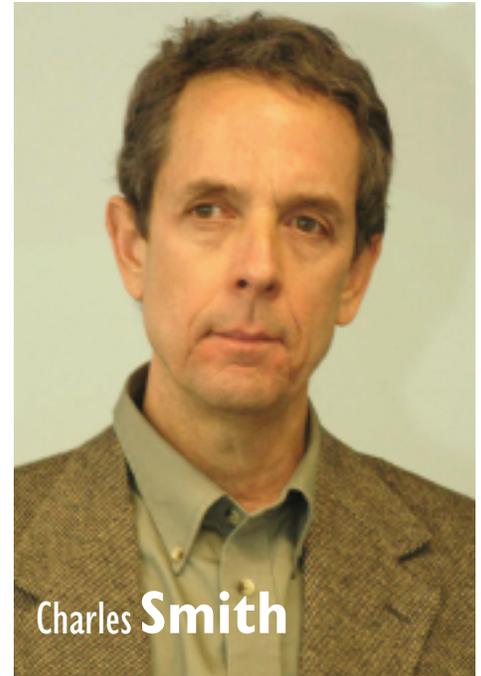
*Dr. Charles Smith is an associate professor in the Department of Management, Entrepreneurship and General Business.*

**E**rich Neumann, the renowned historian of evolving human consciousness, wrote that the group was necessary to bring out the fullest potential of the individual. There is a parallel teaching in the work of a Vietnamese monk and poet, Thich Nhat Hanh, who teaches that the “sangha” – the dedicated group/community intent on learning – is the “Buddha to come.” Thich Nhat Hanh would explain that this reflects the fact that the ultimate for human creative potential is best attained through our collective experience. To put it simply, we evolve, stretch ourselves and tap our creativity through our sometimes difficult efforts to work together.

Our collective efforts, however, do not always seem to bring forth our best! As both Jung and Freud argued, our poten-

tial and intelligence can seem wasted within group situations. Now, with more than 50 years of focused research into group dynamics, we all too often witness negative group experiences. This is especially true for student work teams. Students, when queried, often describe negative experiences and express dissatisfaction with the groups in their classes, citing inequalities in participation, poor communication, recurring problems with non-participants and the groups’ inability to make effective decisions.

My curiosity about this subject was sparked as I witnessed students in my own classes, over many years, performing less and less well in certain “classic” structured experiential exercises. These exercises (desert, arctic and moon survival simulations) were specifically designed to demonstrate how groups



Dr. Charles Smith took the leap from theory to practice to help students work together more effectively.

effectively outperform individuals in solving certain complex problems, when no experts are present.

For many years, and quite consistently, my classroom groups confirmed the data in original research, with groups outperforming individuals more than 80 percent of the time. In the past few years, this situation has changed, and recent groups in my graduate and undergraduate classes have not begun to approach these past levels of performance. In the past three years, for example, groups outperformed the average of individual scores in these exercises only 30 percent to 40 percent of the time.

Perhaps a clue to the challenge we face in the group is found in the root of the term mentioned above: sangha. It comes from two Sanskrit roots – “sam,” meaning “together,” and “gha,” meaning “to come

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# How Samples Get Us to a Wide-Angle View

## Using Statistics to Make Predictions

In the last installment, statistics were described as a tool for summarizing and describing data. Statistics are also used to help make predictions and decisions.

As you recall, statistics are characteristics of samples. We use these statistics to predict or make inferences about the population from which the sample is drawn.

Estimation can be done through the use of the actual sample statistics that we compute. We refer to this as **point estimation** because the inference is being made from one point (the sample) to another point (the population).

So if we sample a group of college freshmen and assess the students' competency on some task (say, proficiency in statistics) and obtain a sample mean of 85, we would infer or estimate that the mean of all of the freshmen (i.e., the population of freshmen) was also 85. Likewise, on this measure, if the sample standard deviation is 25, we would estimate or infer that the standard deviation of the population of freshmen was also 25.

This estimating would also apply to any other statistics that were computed for the sample. For instance, if the sample mode (i.e., the most frequent value) for these competency examinations was 83, our best guess of the population mode is 83. Therefore, any **sample statistic** serves as a point estimate of the corresponding **population parameter**.

Just as an estimation of a population parameter can be done from one (sample) point, it can also be done through the use of a range. This range can be thought of as an interval. So we might say that given the sample's mean of 85, the point estimate of the population mean is 85, and that we are somewhat sure that it is between 75 and 95, our **confidence interval**.

We attach a **level of confidence** with this estimation – if that level is 95 percent, that allows us to say that we are 95 percent sure that the population mean is between 75 and 95. Arriving at the level of confidence – in this case, 95 percent – depends upon several things, as delineated below.

When we choose a sample, we must understand that this is but one possible sample that could have been chosen. Any number of samples could have been chosen at random, so any number of different sample means could have been obtained from that sample. Therefore, the value of the sample mean is a random variable.

Now I know what comes to your mind: if this is the case, how can we be so sure that the value we get from the one sample that we drew is reliable? How can we be so sure that this value represents a good guess of the population mean, much less the *best* guess of the population mean? A bit of probability theory – in particular, the most

important theorem in parametric statistics – comes into play. This theorem is the **Central Limit Theorem**.



Michael J. Barnes

Dr. Michael J. Barnes, associate professor of psychology, says probability theory gives researchers confidence in their sample-based conclusions.

The Central Limit Theorem states that if all possible samples of a certain size (for instance,  $n$ ) are chosen from a population whose mean is  $\mu$  and whose population standard deviation is  $\sigma$ , the sampling distribution of (sample) means (i.e., a collection of all of the possible sample means that could be obtained) would: (1) have a mean equal to the population mean; (2) have a standard deviation equal to  $\sigma/n^{1/2}$ ; and (3) be approximately normally distributed, regardless of the shape of the parent population from which the sample is drawn. As the sample size increases, this approximation to the normal curve improves. Now I am sure that you are confused!

What the Central Limit Theorem is saying is that all of the possible means from

**You've studied  
a sample.  
What does  
that tell you  
about the  
wider group?**

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# Having a Word

## The Humble, the Abused, the Essential Comma

Carol Porr is assistant to the director of the Composition Program in the English Department. She teaches an advanced grammar course, English 102, and serves as the English editing consultant to the CTSE. With this issue of the newsletter, she begins a series of columns on grammar and usage. Questions, comments, and suggestions may be sent to her at [engcip@hofstra.edu](mailto:engcip@hofstra.edu).

To set oneself up as an authority on any subject is to invite criticism.

To set oneself up as an authority on grammar is surely to invite disaster. That being said, I would like to present myself as a person who finds language fascinating: it's music to me, and I love its sound and rhythm. Because of this fascination, I teach grammar. As any teacher knows, the best way to learn a subject is to teach it, or, as a former teacher of mine once instructed, "Just stay one chapter ahead of your students!"

The editor of the CTSE Newsletter thought it might be helpful to the readership to run a series of articles on points of grammar and usage. So, for my first official assignment, I thought I'd begin with a small but very vital mark of punctuation: the comma. If language is music, punctuation scores that music on the page. The most often used (and abused) mark of punctuation is the humble comma.

Most of us were taught that we insert a comma where we would normally pause if we were reading the sentence aloud. Needless to say, this doesn't always work, but it's interesting to note that early marks of punctuation were utilized by the Greeks and Romans to advise actors when to breathe during verbal recitations. Just as pauses and verbal intonations help to convey the meaning in spoken sentences, commas help to clarify the meaning in written sentences. The good news is that there are some fairly inflexible rules governing the use of the comma. The bad news is that sometimes even these rules are subject to alteration (thanks to the MLA).

Essentially, the comma has the following uses:

**The comma separates items in a list of more than two items, including the item before the conjunction:** He was walking up walls, crawling sideways, and turning somersaults as he approached the dean's office.

This is called the serial comma, the Oxford comma, or the Harvard comma. While there are those who do not put the comma before the conjunction (newspaper journalists typically omit the last comma, and the British often do as well), to eliminate it could cause ambiguity.

**When elements in a series are simple and joined by conjunctions, no commas are necessary:** The truth of her transcript was awesome and curious and sad.

**The comma ordinarily precedes a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet) that joins two or more independent clauses:** Harry wants to try out for the Hofstra football team, and he hopes to be a starter. Vanessa wanted to study witchcraft, but she couldn't find any such courses listed in the *Hofstra Bulletin*.

Remember, an independent clause has a subject and a verb. If two or more verbs have the same subject and are joined by *and*, no comma is necessary: Harry wants to try out for the Hofstra football team and hopes to be a starter.

**The comma may be omitted when two short independent clauses are joined by *and* only if the resulting compound sentence would be perfectly clear:** Vanessa loved Harry and she liked him as well.



Carol Porr explains when to use the comma and when to leave it out.

**When the subject is stated only once, but has two actions or verbs, a comma may be used when the conjunction between the verbs is *but*:** Vanessa wanted to study witchcraft, but couldn't find any such courses listed in the *Hofstra Bulletin*.

**When a sentence contains multiple clauses, a comma comes before each coordinating conjunction:** I wanted to follow in the footsteps of my unconventional Aunt Eugenia and study necromancy, and I have never regretted my choice, but I think my mother was jealous of Aunt Esther, and I fear she never approved of me.

**The comma is used to set off contrasted (antithetical) elements:** Drama majors, unlike engineering majors, often reveal their emotions. Vanessa wanted to study witchcraft, not to perform evil deeds, but to perform good acts.

**The comma usually follows introductory words and phrases. The purpose of the comma is to prevent misunderstanding:** Furthermore, the person responsible for damaging university equipment will be fined. Yes, I really do enjoy this. From the back of the room, he screamed out the answer to the professor's question.

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# Extending a Hand to the Troubled (continued from page 1)

## Physical Symptoms of Depression

- Fatigue or loss of energy
- Significant increase or decrease in appetite
- Significant weight gain or loss
- Significant decrease in sexual desire

of course, they are the cause of that stress,” Dr. Guthman said. “That can’t be avoided.”

If a student informs a faculty member of his or her participation in counseling, the teacher is not expected to lower academic standards to assist that student. “When I’m on an airplane,” Dr. Guthman said, “I don’t want to learn that the pilot missed the part about landing a plane, either because the dog ate the pilot’s homework or the pilot was in counseling that day. Similarly, faculty are not expected to compromise academic integrity to accommodate student problems.”

There are rare cases, however, in which students require some accommodations from their teachers. “In these cases, the University has policies to assist faculty with decision making and to govern how these situations are managed.”

National data suggest that the problem of students with serious psychological problems is growing, Dr. Guthman said. For a variety of broad societal reasons, pressure to succeed in college has risen substantially. Also, the social stigma of seeing a counselor has diminished rapidly in recent decades, especially in New York and other metropolitan areas, he explained. And medications are much improved, so many students may now attend university who once wouldn’t have had that option.

Dr. Guthman presented the statistics: nationally, about 1,100 college students commit suicide every year. Suicide is the third-leading cause of death among young people, following homicide and

accidents, which include traffic fatalities. Only one out of six of the students who committed suicide had gone to a campus counseling center.

A student’s suicide on campus last fall and another this spring removed any doubt that Hofstra is somehow immune to the national trends on suicide. Given the student population at Hofstra, the University is at risk of losing one to two students per year to suicide.

Suicides are by no means evenly spaced, Dr. Guthman said. New York University,

## Behavioral Symptoms of Depression

- Sleeping too little or too much (finding it extremely difficult to get out of bed)
- Decrease in motivation
- Loss of interest or pleasure in usual activities
- Crying for no apparent reason
- Withdrawing from people or social situations

for example, with an undergraduate enrollment of about 19,000, reported no student suicides for seven years. Then there were five in 13 months.

Other data also indicate that the problem is growing. More than four-fifths of college counseling centers report that they are seeing more, not fewer, students with diagnosable mental disorders than they were five years ago, Dr. Guthman reported. Among the students seeing campus counselors nationally, the number taking prescription psychiatric medication has increased from 7 percent in 1992 to 18 percent in 2002. That number is now said to be between 20 and 25 percent.

Overall, 15 percent of all college students – that is, more than one in seven students, or about five in the average Hofstra

classroom – meet the criteria for a diagnosable mental health problem, chief among them depression, the counseling director said. One student in 10 has considered suicide. Women attempt suicide more often than men, but men are about twice as likely to succeed.

Dolores Fredrich, the University’s vice president for legal affairs and general counsel, applauded efforts to get faculty more involved in outreach. She said faculty should advise students who may need help to contact Dr. Guthman’s office, and, conversely, that faculty tell counselors in Dr. Guthman’s office about students who might benefit from support. There are legal ramifications, primarily privacy concerns, when a student is in counseling, she said, but those questions arise long after a faculty member has stepped out of the picture. “Whatever we can do to keep our students safe has to be a good thing,” she said.

The office of Student Counseling Services is open weekdays 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. and on Saturday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. At other times and in emergencies, crisis counselors can be reached through Public Safety at (516) 463-6789.

Initial consultations are always free, Dr. Guthman said. If a student goes into counseling, the student is charged \$30 per session, starting with the third session.

## Emotional and Cognitive Symptoms of Depression

- Sadness
- Anger or irritation, possibly mood swings
- Anxiety
- Feelings of helplessness and/or hopelessness
- Excessive guilt
- Impaired concentration and/or decision-making
- Pessimistic thoughts regarding the future
- Feeling like a failure
- Thoughts of death and/or suicide

# From Samples to a Wide-Angle View (continued from page 4)

all of the possible samples that could be drawn will be normally distributed around the value of the mean of the population. Of particular note is that this theorem does not rest on the supposition that the parent population (i.e., the population from which the sample was drawn) is normally distributed. The Central Limit Theorem applies *regardless* of the shape of the parent population.

Combining parts (1) and (3) of the Central Limit Theorem provides us with the following: Given the fact that these possible means are normally distributed around the value of the population mean, the value of the population mean is the **most central positionally** (median) value of any sample mean, is the **most probable or frequent** (modal) value of any possible mean and is **arithmetically** equal to the mean of these sample means. (Remember that in a normal distribution, the median, mode and mean are all equal.)

From our example above, the value of the population mean is 85. Therefore, the most probable value of any of the means of the possible samples is 85. The most

frequently occurring value of these sample means is 85. The mean of all of the sample means is also 85.

Since the sample means are not all equal, they are said to vary. But by how much do they vary? According to the Central Limit Theorem Part (2), above, the standard deviation of these means (i.e., the standard deviation of the distribution of means) is directly proportional to the standard deviation of the population. This is equal to  $\sigma/n^{1/2}$ .

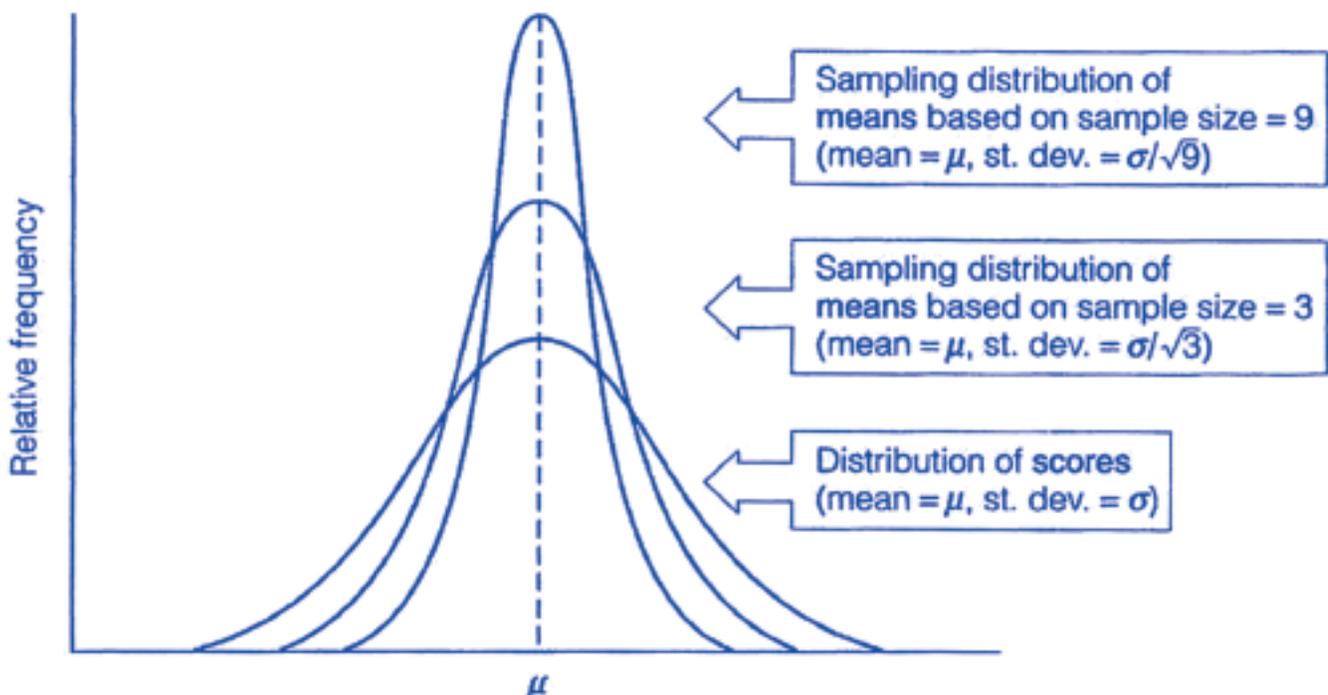
Let's say that in our example above, the value of the standard deviation of the sample means was 5. This could have been derived from a situation in which the standard deviation of the population was 25 and the size of the sample was 25. Therefore, we would have 25 (the value of the population's standard deviation) being divided by 5 (the square root of 25, the sample size). Given the equation in Part (2) of the Central Limit Theorem above, the smaller the standard deviation of the population, the smaller the standard deviation of the possible sample means. Also, the larger the sample size,

the smaller the standard deviation of the possible sample means.

The range of the confidence interval is a function of this standard deviation of the sample means. In our example, the confidence interval ranges from 75 to 95. Half of this interval is 10. To arrive at both numbers of the confidence limits, this value of 10 is added to the value of the sample mean, then subtracted from the sample mean. The value of 10 (half of the interval) is derived from the product of the standard deviation of the sample means (in this case, 5) and the confidence parameter (t or z; in this case, 2). The value of t and z are obtained from tables usually found in statistics texts.

Therefore, the Central Limit Theorem is of the utmost importance to estimation. Through the use of it, the sample mean is an excellent estimator of the population mean. Other estimators can also be shown to be excellent estimators of their respective population parameters.

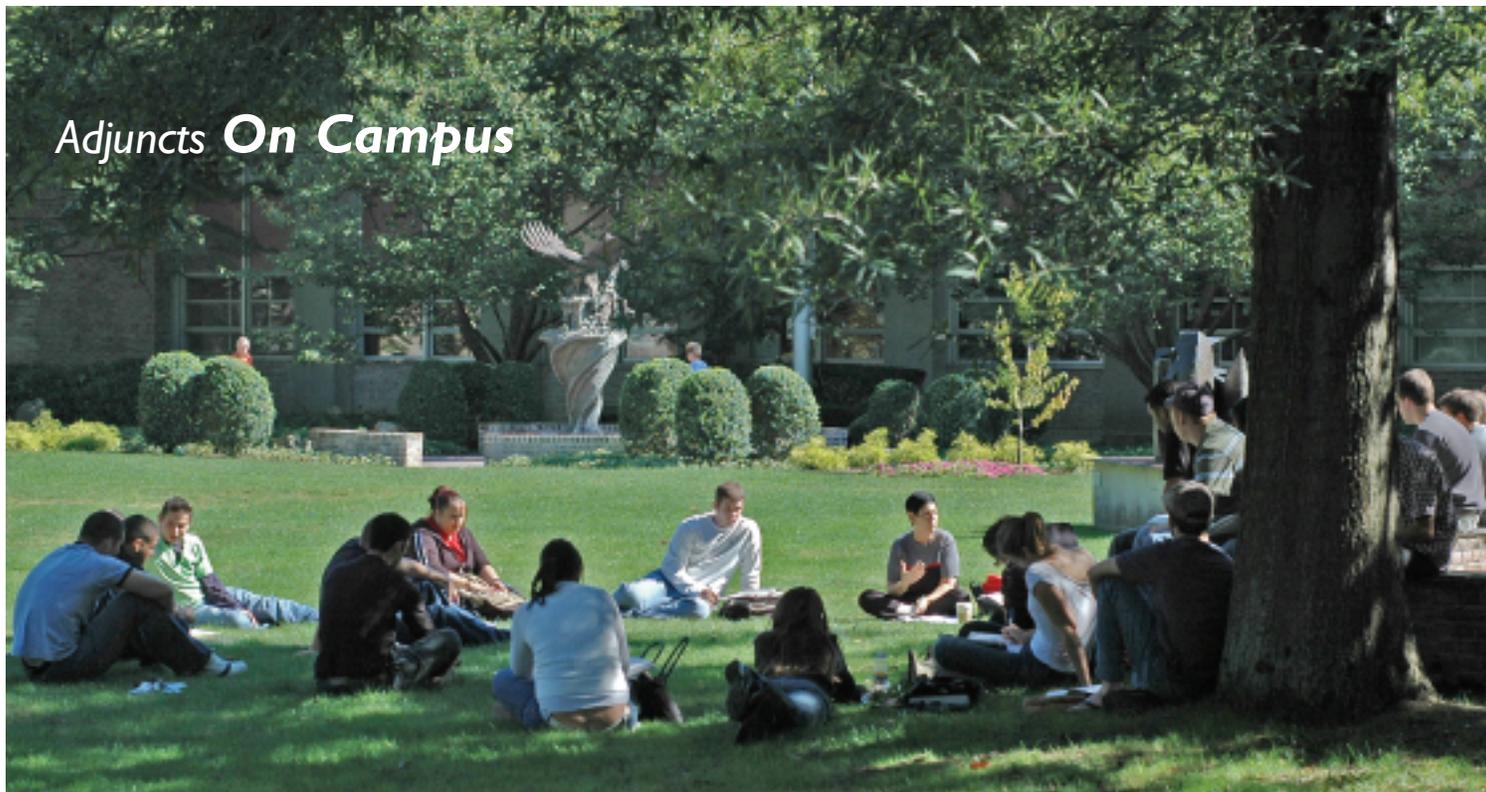
In our next installment, I will demonstrate how inferential statistics can be used to make decisions (in the face of uncertainty).



The Central Limit Theorem says all of the possible means from all possible samples will be normally distributed around the value of the mean of the population.

# Wider Horizons

## Adjuncts On Campus



**A**drian N. Oser, adjunct professor in political science (sitting cross-legged in second row, above), took advantage of nice weather, to take her

students outside on the lawn in front of Barnard Hall. The Center for Teaching and Scholarly Excellence conducted a survey of all Hofstra adjuncts this spring,

to try to find ways to better serve the teaching and research needs of the University's part-time faculty. The results will be analyzed and announced in the fall.

## Did the Students Learn? *(continued from page 2)*

To be effective, outcomes assessment has to take into account far more than writing a good final exam for a course, she said. First, students learn in different ways, and no one exam will test all students equally. She recommended a broad array of testing tools, including portfolios, capstone projects and presentations in conjunction with traditional examinations.

Second, different courses in different disciplines lend themselves to various types of assessment tools, Dr. Maki explained. Spending time thinking about how to assess what students learn will automatically lead a teacher to a thoughtful new analysis of what the course is about.

Moreover, a university education is, or should be, far more than the sum of all the courses a student takes. What Dr. Maki called "deep learning" takes place over time and across disciplines. That is, something from that history course from last year suddenly clicks into place with a topic in a literature course this year.

Of course, to have a chance of promoting and assessing that sort of cross-course or interdisciplinary learning, faculty members have to know what other faculty are teaching.

Provost Herman Berliner, who attended the session along with other senior

administrators, said, "Peggy Maki's presentations on our campus served to enhance and refine our understanding of outcomes assessment and the value of outcomes assessment."

The payoff for the extra effort will be both real and lasting, Dr. Maki said, because if universities ask more thoughtful questions, students will give more thoughtful answers. She concluded her presentation with a quotation from John Biggs in his recent book, *Teaching for Quality Learning at University*: "What and how students learn depends to a major extent on how they think they will be assessed."

# United They Stand: Pulling Together *(continued from page 3)*

into contact.” For a group to work together, it must get beyond all that keeps it from contact – especially from the myths it evokes, and the defenses that play themselves out – such as an overdependence on such authority figures as teachers or emerging leaders, and “fight or flight” reactions (with the associated problems of scapegoating, projection and stereotyping).

True contact within a group is not simple. My working hypothesis to explain the poorer performance in my classes is that in a postmodern society, where listening and communication skills are ever decreasing, such true contact is also decreasing.

The contributions of Erich Neumann, and subsequently of Philip Slater and Gary Gemmill, all suggest that regaining contact in a group setting requires the deconstruction of a number of prevailing myths. In Neumann’s language, the group must evolve, just as humanity has evolved, through myths that attempt to replicate the inclusiveness and nurturing that dominated in ages of matriarchy, then through stern and rational patriarchy, and finally toward a natural embrace of both the feminine and masculine dimensions of the group.

This evolution involves the figurative “killing off” of our projections – here, of both matriarchy and patriarchy – in order to find true inclusiveness and nurturing, true order and a broad rationality that embraces multiple perspectives. The result of this sometimes uncomfortable process is a state of creativity, manifesting itself through true contact among team members, joined in a cause that stretches each person beyond himself or herself.

How might such abstract insights be applicable to a student work team, involved in a semester-long project? Admittedly, it is quite a leap from theory to practice. At the same time, there are things that can be done to create the best possible conditions for a group to evolve.

Here are some suggestions:

**To begin, allow group members to get to know one another in the classroom.** Without this introduction, they may just go to work on their projects without ever even introducing themselves, or may do so by e-mail.

However simplistic this may sound, students often go through a whole semester on a team knowing nothing about one another and having no sense of membership. This step not only allows group members to warm up, but also to create their first myth, a “harmony illusion.” The group must have an illusion of inclusiveness and unity at first so that it can eventually see it as such and move beyond it.

There are many simple exercises available to effect this initial introduction.

**To further develop the group, give it a structured task to perform.** This task, on which the team will be evaluated, could range from the kind of survival exercise mentioned above to any course-related problem, exercise or case study. It should ideally be one with measurable outcomes (which can be compared with those of other groups) and one that can be completed in a short span of time – one class, one week, etc.

This bonds the group members in a task they can reasonably complete at the beginning of a semester, instead of leaving them in suspense about their ability to perform until the end of a semester. As the previous suggestion may evoke the matriarchal side of things, this suggestion evokes the group’s relationship with assigned roles, rules and expectations: its patriarchy. As such, it gives the group a structure within which to create norms and rationalities, preparing it for the time when it can truly function without an outside authority.

**The teacher or facilitator must truly put the group on its own.** After the stage is set, this suggestion is the one pivotal to the group’s evolution. At a critical moment, a great deal of responsibility for the structure of the group should be turned over to its members.

At that point, a highly structured group project is an obstacle to the group’s own self-empowerment and evolution. At this stage, each project should go beyond making “correct” or “incorrect” decisions; it should challenge the students by leaving some intentional ambiguity. Of course, a project goal must be assigned, and requirements for quality and depth noted. Otherwise, only minimal specifications should be given for what the final outcome will look like and how to attain it.

**The teacher or facilitator must strongly resist the temptation to “help out” a group that initially flounders.** Problems with group members, scheduling, etc., must be put into the hands of the group, not solved by the teacher.

While it is so tempting to intervene when a group gets stuck, intervention must be the last resort. Even then, simply having the group meet in the presence of the teacher or facilitator should be the extent of an intervention. In fact, that may often be enough to bring a group into closer contact and get it moving toward a more unified effort.

**Students often describe negative experiences and express dissatisfaction with the groups in their classes.**

## From the Director

# Encouraging New Faculty to Hit Their Stride

Dear Colleagues,

One of the most successful programs the CTSE sponsors is its mentoring program for new faculty. Current faculty volunteer to mentor faculty new to Hofstra. The CTSE invites new faculty and their mentors to a get-acquainted reception at the beginning of the fall semester and sponsors private lunches at the University Club for mentors and their new faculty counterparts. During the year, the CTSE invites new faculty to group lunches at the University Club to discuss their teaching, research, publication, and service experiences and responsibilities.

Conversations with new colleagues at Hofstra, as well as a brief review of the literature on new faculty members in general, suggest that the greatest difficulty in starting a new academic position is managing the competing demands on one's time. It can be daunting to prepare and teach new courses, engage in research, keep up with the literature related both to one's teaching and one's research, fulfill department and University service obligations, and organize one's personal life in a new location.

The CTSE is always looking for ways to improve the experiences of the new faculty the University has worked so hard to choose and hire. All suggestions to this end are appreciated. Academic organizations that have looked at this issue offer some

tips that may be useful at Hofstra to retain our new faculty and help them succeed.

Although it is not uncommon for new faculty at institutions across the country to be assigned to teach large introductory courses, experts in faculty development suggest that whenever possible, new faculty be assigned courses related to their fields of expertise so they can develop their own teaching styles and have some overlap with their areas of research. When they are assigned to introductory courses, senior faculty should be encouraged to share course materials so the new faculty person does not have to start from square one.

In addition, new faculty should be allowed to repeat courses during their first years so they can manage their course preparation time. The American Association for Higher Education advises that new faculty should, at the very least, be assigned fewer preparations in their first year or two. Generally, preparation time for a course taught for the first time will be double or triple that for a repeat course.

One expert has noted that many new faculty members spend 30 hours a week on class preparation but has suggested that they limit their preparation to no more than two hours per lecture hour. That schedule change should permit the time for scholarly research and writing necessary to meet the promotion and tenure criteria.



Susan Lorde Martin says one priority of the CTSE is to help newcomers.

It is important for senior faculty, chairs and academic deans at Hofstra, where we value teaching so highly, to recognize that many doctoral programs emphasize the research aspects of an academic's career, leaving new faculty less well prepared for teaching undergraduate classes. It is in the interest of our entire academic community to take whatever steps we can to encourage success in the careers of our new faculty.

The CTSE will provide, upon request, opportunities to observe classes being taught by many of the very gifted teachers on campus.

Cordially,  
Susan

### Resources:

Bent, Rebecca, and Felder, Richard M. *The New Faculty Member*, available at [www.ncsu.edu/felder-public/Columns/Boice.html](http://www.ncsu.edu/felder-public/Columns/Boice.html).

Gaff, Jerry G. *The Disconnect Between Graduate Education and the Realities of Faculty Work: A Review of Recent Research*, available at [www.aacu-edu.org/liberaleducation/le-su02feature.cfm](http://www.aacu-edu.org/liberaleducation/le-su02feature.cfm).

Sorcinelli, Mary Deane. *Principles of Good Practice: Supporting Early-Career Faculty*, available at [www.aahe.org/ffrr/principles\\_brochure2.htm](http://www.aahe.org/ffrr/principles_brochure2.htm).

UWAdvance, *Supporting Career Development of Pre-Tenure Faculty*, available at [www.engr.washington.edu/advance/resources/Retention/pre\\_tenure.html](http://www.engr.washington.edu/advance/resources/Retention/pre_tenure.html).

# The Humble, Essential Comma (continued from page 5)

If the comma after an introductory prepositional phrase is not necessary to prevent misreading, it may be omitted: At noon the class ended due to lack of interest.

Commas are not used after phrases that begin inverted sentences: With the snow came the delayed class schedule.

The comma also follows introductory adverbial clauses: When it became apparent that they were just pulling our legs, we started kicking.

A comma is used to set off conjunctive adverbs, like *however*, *moreover*, *therefore*, etc., and transitional expressions: We hate your idea; we will, however, give it proper attention. She is, after all, one of the brightest students in the class.

Commas set off nonessential and other parenthetical elements: Snake charmers, who work under a great deal of stress, must stay in excellent physical shape.

Compare the preceding sentence to the following: Snake charmers who are not in excellent physical condition should not be allowed to handle snakes. The clause *who are not in excellent physical condition* is absolutely necessary for the meaning of

the sentence. It is, therefore, an essential element and commas should be omitted.

Use a comma between coordinate adjectives that are not linked by a coordinating conjunction. Coordinate adjectives are modifiers that qualify a noun in the same way: They are young, alert students.

(A good test for coordinate adjectives is to interchange them; another test is to put *and* between them. If the results make sense, the adjectives are coordinate.) If adjectives qualify the noun in different ways, there is no comma (e.g.: one final farewell).

A comma separates a direct quotation from its attribution: The professor said, "I've decided to hold class outside today because of the mild weather."

The comma is also used to set off expressions like *he said* or *she explained* when they interrupt a sentence of direct quotation: "I've decided," the professor said, "to hold the class outside because of the mild weather." If, however, the quoted material is woven into the syntax of the sentence, no comma is necessary: It's amazing how catchphrases such as "You're fired!" permeate society.

A comma separates dates and parts of an address: January 8, 1935, is Elvis's birthday. Bird-in-Hand, Pennsylvania, really does exist.

A comma comes after the salutation in informal letters and to set off words used in direct address:

Dear John,  
I've decided, John, to break things off.

So, there you have it. I tried to keep it "simple." Ah, but I could go on forever! If you are interested in further research on punctuation, check the following publications:

*Eats, Shoots & Leaves* by Lynne Truss – it's still on the *New York Times* best-seller list!

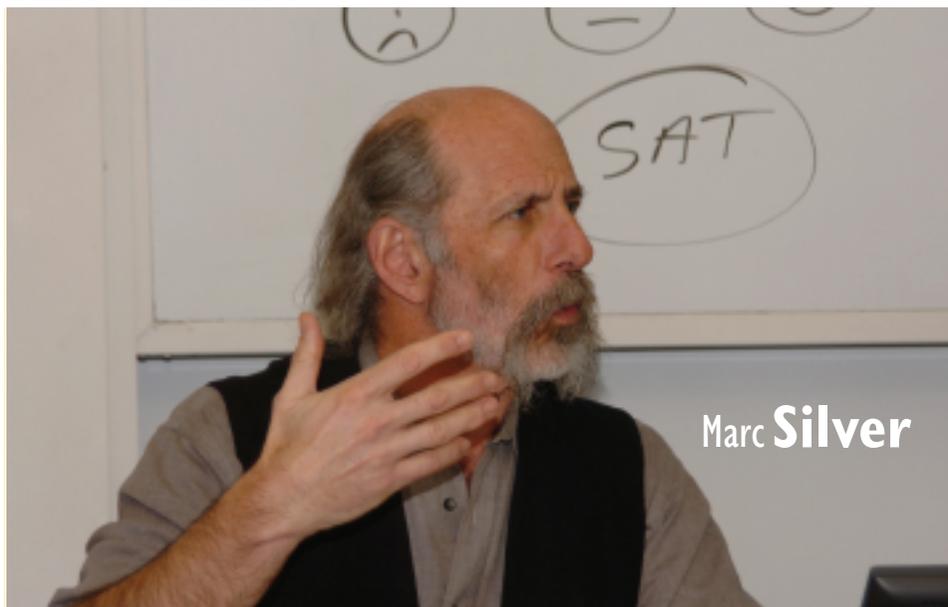
*The New Well-Tempered Sentence* by Karen Elizabeth Gordon.

*The Transitive Vampire* by Karen Elizabeth Gordon.

*Garner's Modern American Usage* by Bryan A. Garner.

To give credit where credit is due, I must admit that I borrowed an idea or two for sentences from Karen Gordon's wonderful books. They really do liven up an otherwise dull subject.

## Harder Than It Looks



Marc L. Silver, chair of the Sociology Department and Program Evaluator for the Center for Teaching and Scholarly Excellence, gave faculty and administrators an introduction to social science research methods, both qualitative and quantitative, in a four-session mini-course this spring. "One of the reasons social science research is so hard," Dr. Silver said, "is that it looks so easy."

## CTSE Members

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## CTSE Staff and Contact Information

Director

**SUSAN LORDE MARTIN, J.D.**

Professor of Legal Studies in Business

208 Weller Hall

Phone: (516) 463-5327

Fax: (516) 463-6505

E-mail: [actslm@hofstra.edu](mailto:actslm@hofstra.edu)

Associate Director and  
Newsletter Editor

**STEVEN R. KNOWLTON, PH.D.**

Professor of Journalism and Mass Media Studies

120 Dempster Hall

Phone: (516) 463-5226

Fax: (516) 463-6505

E-mail: [jrnsrc@hofstra.edu](mailto:jrnsrc@hofstra.edu)

Senior Assistant

**JEANNE RACIOPPI**

200 West Library Wing

Phone: (516) 463-6221

Fax: (516) 463-6505

E-mail: [projmr@hofstra.edu](mailto:projmr@hofstra.edu)

Program Evaluator

**MARC L. SILVER, PH.D.**

Professor of Sociology

202F Davison Hall

Phone: (516) 463-5645

Fax: (516) 463-6505

E-mail: [socmls@hofstra.edu](mailto:socmls@hofstra.edu)

URL: [http://people.hofstra.edu/faculty/Marc\\_L\\_Silver](http://people.hofstra.edu/faculty/Marc_L_Silver)

Quantitative Analysis Consultant

**MICHAEL J. BARNES, PH.D.**

Associate Professor of Psychology

101 Hauser Hall

Phone: (516) 463-5179

Fax: (516) 463-6505

E-mail: [psymjb@hofstra.edu](mailto:psymjb@hofstra.edu)

English Editing Consultant

**CAROL PORR, M.A.**

Adjunct Instructor of English

Assistant to the Director, Composition Program

208 Calkins Hall

Phone: (516) 463-5252

Fax: (516) 463-6505

E-mail: [engcip@hofstra.edu](mailto:engcip@hofstra.edu)

Graduate Assistant

**DANIELLE M. MARICONI, B.A.**

200 West Library Wing

Phone: (516) 463-6221

Fax: (516) 463-6505

E-mail: [projmr@hofstra.edu](mailto:projmr@hofstra.edu)