Building Citizens, Not Just Scholars

By TIMOTHY ROBERTSON

It's a teaching style gaining popularity on college campuses around the country. It involves minimal lecturing and lessons few will find in a textbook. And Hofstra professors received an inside view of how it works at a CTSE program last spring.

Community service learning (CSL) takes students off their seats and places them outside their comfort zones to help them understand the real-life applications — and sometimes consequences — of their future professions.

Professor Arthur Keene, director of the UMass Alliance for Community Transformation, an academic, service-based leadership program at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, stressed the benefits students gain by participating in service learning.

"CSL integrates service in the community with learning in the classroom in order to

Students connect and contribute to their local community at a Queens dig in Professor Christopher Matthews' class "The Archaeology of Slavery and Freedom."

Photo by Brian Ballweg

enhance both," said Professor Keene, who reported that UMass offers more than 100 CSL courses.

Service learning is best described by examples. Students in a UMass anthropology class on "Violence in America" organized a teen program for the local community center, which gained a spot in the town's budget. In a nuclear physics class, students assumed responsibility for testing radon levels in neighborhoods where residents couldn't afford it. A class on community development traveled to rural Virginia, where the predominantly black community of Exmore had fought for a federal grant to gain access to the town's water supply, which served only the white part of town. The students observed this political process firsthand, while helping the community demolish dilapidated housing.

"The work wasn't that important," said Professor Keene, an anthropology professor. "What was important was the relationship — the opportunity to work with people who were engaged in a struggle for change, and apply the lessons we were learning in the classroom and making them work."

CSL combines community work with theories learned in the classroom. Professors can lecture on violence or poverty or homelessness in America, and then take their classes to the streets of their communities and give the students a firsthand look at these theories in action, while teaching students how to care about, understand, and change what happens in a community.

IN THIS ISSUE

Building Citizens, Not Just Scholars

Service learning is not just volunteerism. Its goal is not to palliate the symptoms of social ills but to address the underlying causes. Professor Keene recalls a student at Stanford, who wrote about her time volunteering for the local soup kitchen. "She said it was her most meaningful experience at college, and hoped that one day when her younger sister went to college, she, too, could work in the soup kitchen," said Professor Keene. "Why wasn't she asking why there needed to be a soup kitchen at all?"

Cooperation with community organizations is essential. "We want to meet needs defined by the community, not to impose our own needs," says Professor Keene.

Professor Keene devotes a great deal of class time to encouraging students to reflect on their service learning experiences. Often, students have to be pushed to ask questions outside the box. After students in one of his classes volunteered at a nursing home, Professor Keene posed questions such as: Who ends up in nursing homes? Where are their caretakers, or do they have caretakers? How does this tie in with the health crisis in America?

"We were trying to coax this curiosity out of the students," he said, adding that he's learned that reflecting is the most important aspect of CSL.

Professor Keene first dove into service learning in the mid-1990s. He had just returned from studying the Kibbutzim of Israel, and wondered how similar communities could be forged at Amherst. Moreover, he wanted to make his work and home life "seamless."

"I decided I didn't want to live that divided life any more. I wanted to find a way to make my work as a teacher, as a scholar, as a citizen, as a parent and as a partner seamless. It occurred to me that teaching was one way to do it, and so I started looking for ways to integrate my teaching with what I wanted to do in my life," Professor Keene said.

Through the service learning projects at the University of Massachusetts, students have met with high-ranking officials — including Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick —

and have come to a better understanding of people who live very differently than they do. For Professor Keene, it's about the students becoming better citizens to ensure a better democracy for the future. And, he adds, he is teaching better than he ever has in his 30 years in academia.

"I think I'm more effective. I think my students learn better," he said.

"Today's students want to learn experientially," he added. "Just look at how young people learn to use a new cell phone: they don't read the manual; they just start playing."

Professor Keene believes service learning initiatives have become more important in recent years, with declining skills and motivation to be engaged citizens among members of Generation Y.

"What's the future of our democracy if students in the next generation do not have the skills to practice it?" Professor Keene asked.

Professor Keene said his multisemester program, which is selective and includes a rigorous application process, struggles sometimes not only to attract interested students, but also to retain them for more than one or two semesters.

Professor Keene has offered $500 grants and stressed the ties a student can make with well-connected people, but some students just don't want to spend hundreds of hours of their free time in the community, despite the positives gained through projects.

"We think these are good things," he said. "I'm not convinced the students think so."

Students aren't the only ones hesitant to jump on board with CSL, he added. Professors often have trouble comprehending the concept of learning happening outside the lecture hall.

Some professors say they have a difficult enough time trekking through 22 chapters of a textbook, and don't have time to incorporate service learning into their syllabus.

Anthropology professor Arthur Keene directs a service-based leadership program at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, which offers more than 100 courses with service learning components.

Photo courtesy of University of Massachusetts Amherst

"That's a challenge. Sometimes we have to sacrifice that academic content in order to get a better result," Professor Keene said. "Service learning challenges us to rethink our learning objectives in the classroom."

Some professors at Hofstra already engage in service learning. For example, Professor Chris Matthews has his anthropology classes participating in local archaeological digs. But service learning is not campus-wide at Hofstra, as it is at UMass.

"The caveat I'll tell you is that it is a lot of work. There's no question that service learning requires more of an effort than conventional teaching, but the rewards are so great that it is worthwhile," Professor Keene told the group of faculty.

For the decade-plus that Professor Keene has been involved in CSL at his university, he's seen service learning incorporated not only into his native field of anthropology or obvious fields such as sociology, but even into advanced science classes. He provided the audience with a list of about 40 different types of course ideas for CSL classes.

"We are trying to create a culture of civic-mindedness. Everybody is thinking of ways the university can function as a more effective citizen."

Timothy Robertson is a senior print journalism major at Hofstra University.

Oral Presentations: Make the Connection!

By CINDY ROSENTHAL

For many students, the challenge of transforming a research project into a concise, clear, and entertaining presentation for the classroom community seems monumental. The problem isn't limited to undergraduate presenters, of course: as academics, we've all witnessed conference presentations that miss the mark. Perhaps the speaker lacks vocal energy or clarity, or the paper lacks organization and coherence. But often the problem is a breakdown in interpersonal communication: The point of the presentation isn't clear because the presenter fails to make a dynamic connection with the audience by using the material in a vivid, lively way.

As teachers, when we assign oral presentations, we owe it to our students to detail strategies that can help them communicate their theses and research findings to their peers. There is a big pay-off when the oral report works well. Certainly, a successful presentation is a rewarding, satisfying experience for the presenter. But, even more valuable is the enriched sense of community among the students in the class. When the knowledge and experience shared around the room is active, not passive, the oral presentation is a rewarding experience for all.

How to do it?

▶ Construct a clear thesis and an organized outline. These provide the backbone of any presentation — whether the presenter chooses to create a PowerPoint presentation or work from index cards.

▶ Clarify, select, and edit. Oral presentation — and especially PowerPoint presentations — should never be loaded with text. In most cases, full paragraphs from notes or from a research paper should not be pasted onto index cards or projected onto a screen.

▶ Engage the audience:

1. Ask questions! Presenters should bullet the high points, which can be used to spark discussions.

2. Visuals count! Select effective, appropriate visuals that underline a few important themes in the research and deepen one's understanding of and appreciation for the details of the project. Whatever the discipline, visuals focus our attention and expand our awareness of a subject in new ways — and sometimes raise important questions, too.

3. Use your creativity to add elements that can enliven your presentation. How can you change the pace or the "feel" of the presentation? Try varying your vocal style or quality if you're quoting different individuals or sources from your research. Ask for volunteers from the class to help illustrate a particular point in your presentation. Is there an activity that relates to your topic that you can ask the class to do? Adding music to a presentation, when appropriate, can enhance the experience in multiple ways.

▶ Remember these performance fundamentals:

1. Eye contact with your audience is crucial! If using PowerPoint, don't let the laptop become the leader of the presentation — you, the human, must lead, inspire, and make the connection with the audience.

2. Tell yourself to SLOW DOWN. As you move from point to point in the outline, based on your thesis, and supported with examples, find the natural transitions in your presentation and allow yourself to stop, look around, take a breath. Ask your spectators if they have any questions about the material. Feel free to move around, and perhaps, to re-situate yourself in a different part of the room in relation to the audience.

3. Connect with individual spectators if you can. Hopefully, you'll have friends in your listening audience. But if you don't know anyone in the audience,

imagine that you're sharing your valuable information and insightful interpretations with a close friend — that's the best way to help you relax, focus, and make the connection with your audience work.

4. Applause. That's the job of the audience. Every presentation should end with this response. The presenter deserves it.

Cindy **Rosenthal**

Photo by Carol Rosegg

The presenter deserves feedback, too. Ask the students to assess the oral presentation assignment as a whole and to keep an ongoing record of each individual presentation according to an established rubric that tracks presentation skills and strategies. Students can compile their constructive critiques and document what they've learned about successful presentations.

And, be sure to keep these notes handy when delivering your next academic conference paper!

Cindy Rosenthal is an associate professor of drama and dance, School for University Studies fellow, co-director of the Women's Studies Program, and public speaking consultant for CTSE.

Alternatives to Lecture   by BRUCE TORFF

Jigsaw Lessons: Making the Pieces Fit

As if teaching isn't puzzling enough from time to time, here I am to talk about a kind of lesson called a jigsaw.

It goes without saying that you know a great deal about your subject, and your students don't, most of the time. But that does not mean that students can't teach each other a great deal, under the right circumstances. One way to do this is a jigsaw lesson.

In a jigsaw lesson, individual students or small groups (a) are assigned to study an aspect of the "topic of the day," (b) make a short presentation to the class summarizing what they studied, and (c) participate in a brief professor-moderated discussion that underscores the main points the presentation covered (or should have covered). Each individual or group studies a different aspect of the topic, so the "overall picture" comes into view when all the pieces of the puzzle have been presented.

Let's look at the steps in this approach, along with an example from a lesson in social development included in a course in adolescent development and learning.

Dividing up the content. Consider how the topics and issues in your discipline are subdivided. Professors can readily list their discipline's various concepts, theories, research areas, events, historical figures and so on. For example, in adolescent social development, there are distinct bodies of literature on topics such as peer relationships, extracurricular activities and employment.

These subdivisions can be useful for dividing up the content in the discipline, so that each student or group has a piece they can research and then teach to everyone else.

Your assigned readings might have all the material you need to give each student or group a separate job to do, but it is sometimes necessary to compile an information packet or make a set of file folders.

In the example lesson, the instructor might compile a handout with 30 tables and figures, each providing research data on a different topic in social development. Each student is assigned one table or figure. Such assignments can be done randomly, or you can steer particular items to particular students.

Preparing an activity handout. Students need to know what to do with the content they have been assigned. An "activity handout" tells students what to do, how to do it, what to produce and when it's due (I call these the "big four" for structuring an educational activity). In the social development lesson, the handout apprises students that they have to prepare and deliver a five-minute presentation that answers key questions about the table or figure they were assigned. These include questions that can be answered simply by studying the table or figure (e.g., "at what age are adolescents most at risk for allowing peer influence to lead to bad decisions concerning drugs and alcohol?"). Also included are questions that require students to think critically (e.g., "why is this age such a time of risk?").

If you are so inclined, it can be helpful to teach students a little about what constitutes a successful presentation, including such nuggets as budgeting one's presentation time effectively and avoiding boring the audience to tears by reading prepared text verbatim.

Setting up the activity. Even if the activity handout is crystal clear, jigsaw lessons require a little patient explaining. Public speaking sometimes makes students apprehensive, so don't be put off if you get a few nervous questions. Avoid saying anything that might make the activity seem
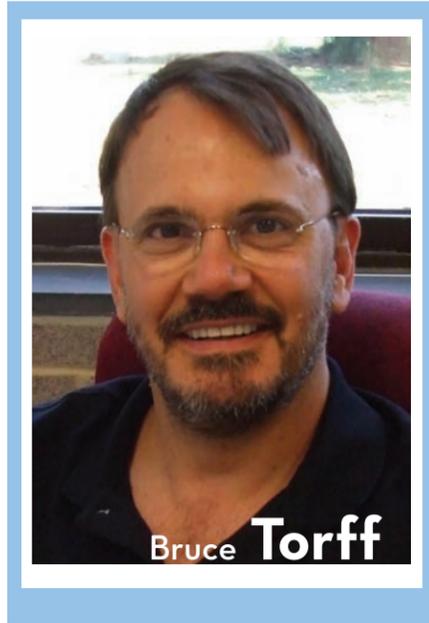
intimidating or onerous; folks don't do their best work when knock-kneed.

Tell students how the presentations will be graded and how much weight they are given. To add some spice, consider granting extra credit to the top three presenters (based on your judgment or popular vote).

Give students time during class to study and prepare their presentations, while you "work the room," answering questions and offering encouragement.

Coordinating the presentations. Keep close track of the time so that all the presentations get squeezed in. It may take some oomph to get especially loquacious students to finish in the allotted time, since presenters often have a lot of adrenaline going. Except when a student runs out of time, don't interrupt during a presentation — even when there is a point you'd dearly love to make. Holding your tongue can be tough, but it's essential to give students their chance to speak. (You'll have a chance to toss in your two cents later, anyway).

Leading post-presentation discussions. After each presentation, the professor follows up with questions posed to the presenter (or other students, if the presenter lacks an answer). These questions prompt presenters to push their thinking a little further, or consider what they might have overlooked or misconstrued. Should a presentation and discussion fail to cover essential material or require factual correction, add one of the two-minute "mini-lectures" I've be ranting about in this space. (Remember the slogan: *ask before you tell*.)

It can be helpful to be prepared with specific questions to ask as follow-ups, to make sure the points you hold dear are suitably aired.

Wrapping up. When the last presentation has been heard and discussed, it's time for you to initiate closure to the jigsaw lesson. Be sure to summarize the main points in the lesson (or ask questions to get students to do it, if you have time). Put the spotlight on the big picture, showing how all the presentations are connected; it's all too easy for students to lose the forest for the trees. Holding a secret ballot vote for the best presentation can be a hit with students.

Jigsaw lessons are effective vehicles for learning and fun to teach, in my experience. They can be especially helpful on topics that are mind-numbing when lectured, or with topics that are clearly multifaceted (like the social development lesson).

In this example there were enough charts and graphs for all students to have their own. In other cases students can work in groups to do a jigsaw lesson. For example, imagine a lesson in which students are divided into five groups, with each group assigned to one of the competing theories in a given research area, and presenters are charged to explain the theory and persuade listeners of the its utility. Such a lesson makes extensive use of "cooperative learning," a topic for another day.

In a jigsaw lesson, students learn a great deal about the topic they studied, as well as hear their peers talk about similar topics. At the end of the day, students will have had a rich encounter with the topic at hand, and you will have avoided an extended lecture.

Bruce Torff is an associate professor of curriculum and teaching, director of the Doctoral Program in Learning and Teaching in the School of Education and Allied Human Services, and pedagogical research consultant for the CTSE.

Bruce **Torff**

> "... don't interrupt during a student presentation — even when there is a point you'd dearly love to make."

Getting on Board:
Online Class Discussions That Work

By JUDITH TABRON

It's not easy to get a good discussion going in class, and it's not easy online either. A good discussion board can be the most transformative use of technology in our teaching. But many of us have tried it and found that online discussions tend to peter out or that students' contributions to them can be repetitive and uninteresting. And if the discussion does take off, how do we stay on top of it? A good, active discussion board includes at least two or three posts a week from students. Are we supposed to respond to 60 online posts a week on top of everything else? And how do we grade any of this work?

Just as in the classroom, a good discussion doesn't happen by accident. As with face-to-face discussion, you need to seed the discussion with interesting questions and sometimes steer conversation in productive directions. You also need to give students a reason to participate.

Most students tend not to tackle tasks that are marked "optional." To get the full benefits from online discussions, you'll need to give students credit for good participation. This should be separate from the credit they get for participating in face-to-face discussions.

The new Discussion Board Grader in Blackboard counts up student contributions to the discussion board and lets you see at a glance who's been writing. You may want to simply give students credit for participating. Or you can also assign a grade to their work, depending on whether or not their contributions show that they've been reading others thoughtfully, applying the material of the class, and making substantive remarks. (Faculty Computing Services can provide a rubric developed by Hofstra faculty for grading online contributions.)

It can be a useful exercise to start your semester by working with students to

Judith Tabron is director of Faculty Computing Services, which will happily consult with faculty members about how to encourage better online discussion.

formulate a class policy on what a "good" discussion board post is. You'll certainly want to spell out your expectations, and make the rewards clear in your syllabus.

You may want to give students one "free swing" at the discussion board first, just to make sure everyone can log in and make a useful contribution. This usually clears up any confusion your students may have about the requirement that they participate. This is less of a problem these days than it used to be; 80 percent of Hofstra students already have a Blackboard-supplemented course and many already know how to use the discussion board. But that doesn't mean they know how *you* want them to use it, so give them some feedback at least the first few times. About the middle of the term, give students a way to check in and find out how participation is affecting their grade.

There are some benefits that only come with online discussion. It provides students with practice in informal but academic writing. It encourages them to try out new ideas before they're ready for a formal paper. And it's very clear that quieter students tend to "speak up" in online

discussions. Frequently classes can get over the awkward "no one's talking, everyone's waiting for someone else to start" phase online, and will start really sharing their ideas, so that when they meet again in their face-to-face class, they can pick up talking as if they've already been holding class somewhere else all week — which is exactly what they will have been doing.

Discussion boards can also be an excellent tool for students to acquire critical thinking skills. Reading and writing text is still the best way to develop these abilities.

If you can't picture the discussion board as a regular part of the class, don't do it! Just as with face-to-face discussion, it takes a class a while to develop a discussion dynamic online. If it isn't critical, we recommend you not use it. Students report frustration with electronic tools that they perceive to be used poorly or inconsistently. Better not to tackle it until you have a pedagogical need for it.

When you do find a way to enhance your class with it, a good discussion board can

be one of the liveliest parts of your class. You may want to lead the discussion online yourself, or assign a student moderator each week with a different topic. (You'll still want to give students feedback for at least the first several weeks, with comments such as "What sparked this idea?" or "Do you have evidence for this point?" or "I think this has already been said.") In larger classes, you can have small, seminar-style discussion groups online and "visit" each one once a week. Try to address in class topics that were raised online; this can be invigorating for both you and your students.

Just remember, like face-to-face discussion, good online discussion doesn't just happen. You've spent your career honing your skills at encouraging the conversation in your classroom. You can do the same — with the same ups, downs, and delightful rewards — online.

If you'd like to consult with Faculty Computing Services on how to encourage useful online academic discussion, visit us at the Faculty Support Center, 215 McEwen Hall, call (516) 463-6894, or e-mail fcshelp@hofstra.edu.

Judith Tabron is director of Faculty Computing Services.

From the Director
Writing Letters of Recommendation

Dear Colleagues,

Most professors regularly receive requests from students to write letters recommending them for scholarships, fellowships, graduate programs, or jobs. This is another of the responsibilities of faculty for which most have not had any formal preparation or instruction. Moreover, students often are unaware of what kind of letter will help them the most and so, without guidance, they do not supply appropriate or sufficient information.

Before agreeing to write a letter, get as much information as you can from the student. What is the recommendation for? When is the letter due? Is there a form provided, or a confidentiality statement in which the student waives the right to see the letter? Ask the student to provide you with a copy of a resume, transcript, and samples of the work done in your class or lab or club. What are the student's goals?

Generally, a letter of recommendation should:

1. Explain how you know the student and why you are qualified to provide the recommendation.

2. Give specific examples that demonstrate that the student possesses qualities the recipient values, e.g., intellectual ability, writing skills, originality, independent thinking, motivation, communication skills, interpersonal skills. Avoid conclusory adjectives and generalities.

3. Compare the student to others you have taught. If the student is in the top 2 percent of students in 20 years of teaching, say so. Predict student's success in the chosen program.

4. Summarize your main points in a concluding paragraph.

Generally, your letter should not be more than one or two pages. Don't forget to save a copy of your letter and to ask the student to let you know the results of his or her application.

A problem for professors arises when they would like to help their students, but they cannot honestly give unqualified, resounding endorsements. If you cannot write a strong letter, you can decline and suggest that the student ask someone else. If the student cannot find someone to write a strong letter, you might take the opportunity to do some advisement about realistic study or career goals.

As with most things nowadays, the Internet provides many sources with suggestions for writing letters of recommendation as well as sample letters. Sites that may be particularly helpful include:

▶ gradschool.about.com/cs/writingletters /a/writeletter.htm?p=1

▶ career.berkeley.edu/Letter/LetterGuidelines.stm

▶ web.princeton.edu/sites/career/Faculty/ Partnership/credentials_info.html

▶ orl.med.umich.edu/rehughes/sample_letter.pdf

Susan Lorde **Martin**

Best wishes for a successful and enjoyable fall semester.

Susan

Susan Lorde Martin is director of the CTSE and the Cypres Family Distinguished Professor of Legal Studies in Business.

Battling Plagiarism

By CAROL FLETCHER

The most effective technique to fight plagiarism is to require students to submit assignments to turnitin.com, a survey of Hofstra professors suggests.

Paul Carson, who teaches composition courses at Hofstra, shares his anti-plagiarism strategies.

In spring '07, philosophy professor Mark McEvoy, with help from the CTSE, surveyed faculty to find out what measures they were taking to combat academic dishonesty, and how effective they perceived these measures to be. One hundred thirty-five professors responded.

Here's how effective users of various anti-plagiarism strategies found them to be:

	Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Ineffective
Require submission to Turnitin	64%	32%	3%
Submit to Turnitin when suspicious	42%	44%	13%
Explain plagiarism on assignment sheet	28%	43%	28%
Explain plagiarism on syllabus	32%	44%	24%
Assign hard-to-plagiarize exercises	54%	44%	2%

Complete results of the survey were circulated among faculty last year (*see CTSE Newsletter*, spring 2007). Recently, faculty met to share anti-plagiarism strategies.

Cheat-Proofing Assignments

Some survey respondents provided examples of difficult-to-plagiarize assignments, including: requiring students to adopt a particular voice in an essay, asking students to write a letter to a philosopher being studied, tying assignments closely to classroom discussions or current events, and, in a business class, having students market a fictional product.

Professors also noted that they changed assignments each semester so papers couldn't be passed down from roommate to roommate.

Instructional Technology Specialist Paul Carlson says that, if he suspects plagiarism in a composition class he is teaching, he may ask students to rewrite their papers in class — without looking at the original. An added benefit of this exercise is that it wrests students from their original document and sources, freeing them to think independently about their theses.

Some surveyed professors said they make sure students discuss their ongoing work in class and provide partial drafts throughout the semester. Such staged assignments can help fight plagiarism in a number of ways. "First, the student is less likely to be completely lost on the last day and therefore tempted to plagiarize," says Professor McEvoy. "Also, if you are checking the student's work at each stage, there are more points at which to catch illicit material."

PLAGIARISM AVOIDANCE CHECKLIST
Mark McEvoy asks students to submit a signed form such as this one on the date their final drafts are due.

In submitting this paper, I assert that:

1. I have included a complete list of all sources (including the textbook, any other book or article, Internet pages, class handouts, Blackboard postings) consulted in preparing my paper, including those I consulted only in order to better understand the readings.

2. My paper does not contain any of the following:

   ‣ Material quoted from any source (i.e., three or more words taken in the same order from a source), except where I have explicitly noted that I am quoting somebody else's work.

   ‣ Material paraphrased from any source, except where I have explicitly noted that I am paraphrasing from somebody else's work.

   ‣ Material that is word-for-word identical with material contained in a classmate's paper (other than allowable quotes).

3. If in writing my paper, I have consulted with a friend who has taken this course before (either at Hofstra University or elsewhere), I will let the professor know before handing in my paper.

I understand that I will receive a grade of zero for my paper, and official notice of plagiarism will be sent to the Office of the Dean of Students and to the Provost's Office, if my paper is found to contain any of the items listed under #2 above.

I further understand that if my paper contains more than 20 percent quoted material, my paper will receive a grade of C or lower, even if I have not committed plagiarism.

Signed _____

Teaching Integrity

Professor McEvoy also endorses teaching students about what constitutes plagiarism, particularly during their first year. Students may not understand the difference between acceptable paraphrasing and merely

Library professor Margaret Burke, who brought Turnitin to Hofstra, believes its greatest value is as a deterrent.

changing every third word. Paul Carson says he encourages students to put the original text aside when paraphrasing so as not to get tied to the source's constructions. A number of schools have developed teaching materials on academic honesty. Indiana University, for example, has an excellent quiz on plagiarism that can be found at **education.indiana.edu/~frick/plagiarism/item1.html**.

Professor McEvoy also requires students to sign a "Plagiarism Avoidance Checklist" that they submit with their final draft. The checklist (sample on page 8) helps educate students about what is unacceptable and prevents students from arguing, later, that they didn't know what they did was wrong.

Combining Strategies

The best strategy to combat plagiarism may well be a combination of techniques: education on academic honesty, an anti-plagiarism contract, and regular use of Turnitin. "The real power of Turnitin is that

it is a deterrent," says Library professor Margaret Burke, who brought Turnitin to Hofstra in 2001. Indeed, as the number of Hofstra professors using Turnitin has grown, the number of submitted papers with non-original material has declined. Today more than 375 instructors at the University use Turnitin.

Although some students have challenged the legality of Turnitin, a federal judge recently ruled that it does not violate the copyright protections to which student work is entitled. Professor Burke noted that the decision was reported in a March 26 article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, and an appeal is planned.

Donald McCabe, founding president of the Center for Academic Integrity, has found that honor codes can have a positive impact on academic honesty. By making it clear to students that academic honesty is valued and explaining why, schools can encourage integrity.

Special Teaching Leaves: FAQs

What is a special teaching leave?
A teaching leave is a sabbatical offered specifically to faculty who want to do research related to the enhancement of teaching. Faculty chosen for such sabbaticals receive a semester of paid leave to develop new teaching methods, investigate pedagogical theories, study problems related to education, or update and improve course materials, curricula, and resources.

What types of projects qualify?
Guidelines are intentionally broad to accommodate a wide range of projects. Past recipients have devoted their leaves to such diverse projects as building school-based programs for peace building in Cyprus, developing a new pedagogy for teaching business statistics, and introducing new equipment into an electrical engineering lab.

Who is eligible?
Faculty members with at least five years of full-time experience at Hofstra, or five

years since their last leave, are eligible. Eligibility standards are the same as those for scholarly leaves and are detailed in the Faculty Policy Series.

How do I apply?
Applicants should submit a detailed proposal to the chair describing the project, its importance, and its intended outcomes. Each proposal should be accompanied by a CV and evidence of teaching excellence, such as course evaluations and peer observations. For more details on how to apply, visit the CTSE pages of the Hofstra Web site.

What is the deadline for applications?
The application deadline is announced by the Provost's Office early in the fall semester and is generally in the second half of October.

How likely is it for my application to be approved?
In evaluating applications, the CTSE looks at such factors as quality of the proposal, the project's applicability to teaching

across disciplines, the likelihood of completion, and the applicant's teaching and service record. In the past few years, most well-articulated projects that have met the criteria have been approved.

Can I apply for both a special teaching leave and a scholarly leave?
Yes. Often, a scholarly project also has a pedagogical dimension. Applicants may apply for both types of leave, but may receive only one.

How do I report the results of my leave?
The CTSE hosts an annual event, "Program on Scholarship in Teaching," at which recipients of teaching leaves report on their projects. This year, the program will take place on Wednesday, October 22 during Common Hour. All faculty are invited.

How can I find out more information?
Visit **hofstra.edu/Faculty/CTSE/ctse_teaching_leaves.html**, or e-mail CTSE Director Susan L. Martin at Susan.L.Martin@hofstra.edu.

Woe is I, or, the Case of the Pesky Pronoun

If the hyphen is the pest of the punctuation family (see "To Hyphen or Not to Hyphen," spring 2008 issue), the pronoun has the same distinction among the eight parts of speech.

Pronoun case refers to the form a pronoun takes when it functions as a subject, an object, or a possessive in a clause.

The basic rule is simple enough: when a pronoun is the subject of a verb, it is in the nominative case (*We decided to take a vacation.*); when it is the object or indirect object of the verb, it is in the objective case (*The company sent us on vacation.*); and when the pronoun is the object of the preposition, it is in the objective case (*My friends went on vacation with us.*).

All of the above examples are clear and rarely cause problems for the speaker or writer. We'd never say "Us decided to take a vacation" or "My friends went on vacation with we." However, when writers use pronouns in compound subjects or objects, they start getting into trouble.

Consider the following:

Between you and I, vacation sounds like a great idea.

The sentence is incorrect; the object of the preposition should be "you and me." But the writer put the object of the preposition

> "Pronoun errors, both great and small, crop up everywhere — even at the Super Bowl."

in the nominative case — perhaps because "I" sounds a little more formal and stilted, which we associate with correctness. Grammarians call this "hypercorrection." Ben Yagoda, author of *When You Catch an Adjective, Kill It*, calls hypercorrection "a polite way of saying 'wrong but with good intentions.'"

I've noticed young people often do the same thing with compound subjects. I tell my students the story of how one Christmas Day at my house, with all the family gathered around the holiday table, my 23-year-old nephew asked for everyone's attention. He said he had an announcement to make, and, putting his arm around his girlfriend, said, "Me and Dominique were married yesterday." While everyone else looked aghast that he would suddenly run off and get married, I couldn't help but think, "How could an educated young man use the objective case for the subject of a sentence?"

No matter where a pronoun appears — even if it is in conjunction with another noun or pronoun — it must take its case according to how it is being used in the clause.

More case files

A few more rules about the case of pronouns:

▶ **When used with *to be*:** If a pronoun is the complement of a form of the verb *to be*, it should be in the nominative case:

It is I.

The students mentioned were she and Joseph.

I realize, of course, that most of us don't actually speak that way, preferring the much less formal sounding "It's me." When my students ask, "Professor Porr, when you answer the phone, and someone asks for Professor Porr, do you

really say, "This is she"? I laugh and tell them that I say, "Speaking"!

▶ **In elliptical clauses:** Pronouns that are subjects must be in the nominative case even when the verb is implied. This often happens in clauses of comparison, introduced by the conjunctions *as* or *than*:

He knows more about the subject than she (does).

The verb is understood; still, the pronoun is in the nominative case.

▶ **As appositives:** When pronouns act as appositives of other nouns — identifying or elaborating on the noun while having the same function in the sentence — they take on the same case as the noun. Thus, the pronoun is in the nominative case when it acts as an appositive of a noun or another pronoun in the nominative case:

Two students — Joseph and she — were selected to deliver addresses at graduation.

When the pronoun is in apposition with a noun or pronoun in the objective case, it, too, will be in the objective case:

The instructor gave the assignment to two people, Mary and me.

▶ **With infinitives:** Although the rule is that a pronoun acting as a subject is in the nominative case, there is an exception: when the pronoun is the subject of an infinitive (*to* + verb), that pronoun is in the objective case:

She asked me to give the speech.

He took her to be me.

This exception doesn't usually cause problems because the speaker or writer thinks of the pronoun as the object of the verb. Technically, however, the whole infinitive phrase is the object.

To Whom It May Concern

By far the most confusing pronoun question people have is when to use the relative pronouns *who* and *whom*. In a nutshell, use *who* when a pronoun should be in the nominative case and *whom* when it should be in the objective case. The case depends on whether the pronoun is functioning as a subject, an object, or a possessive in a clause — unfortunately, it is not always easy to tell.

Here is an example of the nominative case:

The man who is the new governor of New York grew up in Hempstead.

In this sentence, the pronoun *who* is the subject of the clause *who is the new governor of New York*.

The trouble arises when parenthetical expressions such as *you think*, *I believe*, or *I suppose* come between the pronoun and the verb. Consider the following:

The man who the press says is the new governor of New York grew up in Hempstead.

In the above sentence, *the press says* is simply an intervening clause. The basic sentence is still the same as the first one. Here is another example of an intervening clause:

Who do you think answered the question on page three?

The basic clause is: *Who answered the question on page three*, and *who* is its subject.

The use of *whom* is rapidly declining in informal use. Still, formal usage requires *whom* whenever that pronoun serves as an object. In the following sentence, *whom* is the direct object of the verb saw:

The students whom we saw studying are English majors.

Last spring it came to light that ex-Governor Eliot Spitzer made quite a few serious errors in judgment … but he did manage to use the correct form of the relative pronoun in the following sentence:

I apologize to the public, to whom I promised better.

Whom is correct because it is the object of the preposition *to*.

The biggest problem, I think, occurs when the whole clause is the object of the preposition. Consider this:

I will give the best grades to whoever earns them.

In this sentence, *whoever* is the subject of the verb *earns* in the clause *whoever earns them*.

All these rules and exceptions can be overwhelming. But some of my students have come up with a reliable trick for deciding when to use *who* or *whom*: they replace the relative pronoun with the appropriate form of the personal pronoun *he/she* (or *him/her*). It works!

No satisfaction

Pronoun errors, both great and small, crop up everywhere — even at the Super Bowl. Apparently, when asked how he felt

about the Rolling Stones finally being asked to appear at the halftime show of the 2006 Super Bowl, Mick Jagger said, "All things come to he who waits."

While most people who heard the quote probably thought nothing was wrong with it, William Safire, *New York Times* columnist and chief of the grammar police, complained that Jagger used the wrong case of the pronoun. Since the first pronoun in the quote is the object of a preposition, it should be in the objective case; the corrected sentence should be "All things come to him who waits."

If that sounds "funny" to you, you are not alone. Many people wrote to Safire and complained that *he who waits* should be considered a noun clause and *he* should therefore be considered the subject. I don't agree with them, but, well, it's debatable. Even Safire relented and conceded that some rules aren't so awful when broken.

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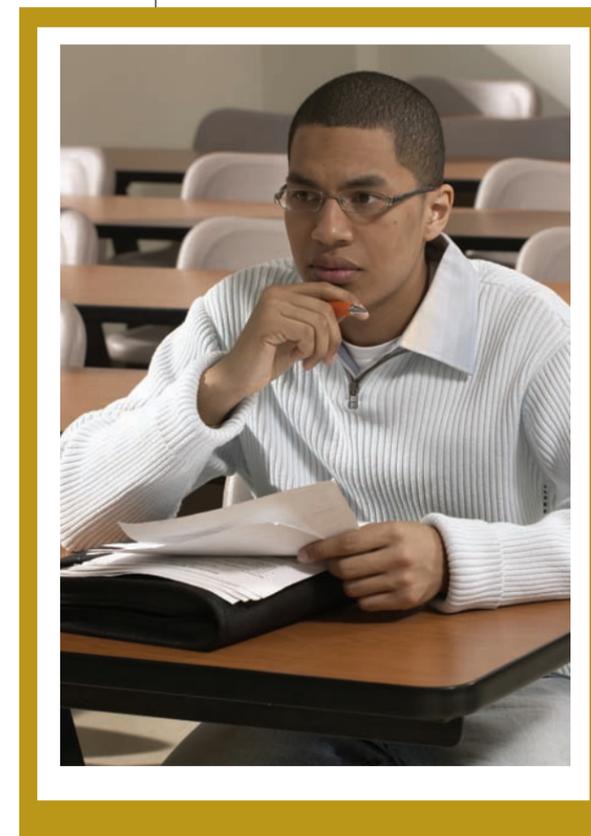
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