

CTE This Week **August 18-22, 2003**

We teach what we like to learn and the reason many people go into teaching is vicariously to re-experience the primary joy experienced the first time they learned something they loved.

~Stephen Brookfield

Teaching Tip of the Week - "The course syllabus has historically been viewed as a somewhat tentative plan that a professor provides students to help them better understand the mission and goals of a particular course. In recent years however, an increasingly consumer-oriented and litigious society has markedly influenced the evolution of a course syllabus into nothing less than a binding contract between professor and student. Since your major goal is to facilitate student mastery of your course material, the syllabus should eliminate all barriers to learning by anticipating nearly any reasonable question that a student might develop about the course. Especially important are those questions that occur as the course approaches its conclusion and students become increasingly conscious of their final grade. These include weights of graded assignments and penalties for such behavior as faulty attendance and late submission of assignments. Penalties imposed on students that are not clearly stated in the syllabus, e.g. lowering a grade for inappropriate attendance, will generally not be defended by instructional leaders.

Because today's students often have many demands on their time, it is also especially critical that your syllabus includes a schedule that includes due dates of assignments and examinations. While your heading might include "tentative," expect to change dates only if extremely severe weather or similar major unanticipated event causes cancellation of one or more class meetings. Before distributing a final version of your syllabus, invest the time to have your instructional leader or mentor to review it, ensuring it is not only complete from an instructional perspective, but also properly addresses any departmental or institutional perspectives of which you might not otherwise be aware." (from Dr. Richard Lyons <http://www.developfaculty.com/tips.html>).

Your syllabus should include basic information including course and instructor information (title, meeting times, office hours, contact phone and office numbers, etc.), text information, grading information, course objectives, course and departmental policies, etc. **CTE has an example of a syllabus in the form of a template that you can modify for your course. Check it out at http://www.cte.tcu.edu/syllabus_Template.doc.** You may want to add TCU's statement on disability services at TCU to your existing syllabus. That statement reads:

Texas Christian University complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 regarding students with disabilities. Eligible students seeking accommodations should contact the Coordinator for Students with Disabilities in the Center for Academic Services located in Sadler Hall, 11. Accommodations are not retroactive, therefore, students should contact the Coordinator as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations. Further information can be obtained from the Center for Academic Services, TCU Box 297710, Fort Worth, TX 76129, or at (817) 257-7486.

eLearning Teaching Tip of The Week: Consider building in multiple types of interaction in your course. The most common is the learner-teacher interaction, but you may want to have student interacting with each other (learner-learner). Learners complete group work to improve critical thinking skills, or design a website for an instructional program. There

is also the opportunity to have learner-guest speaker types of interaction. This might be an opportunity for your students to collaborate with guests in an online environment. If you'd like more information about this tip or have other questions, contact Romy Hughes (r.hughes@tcu.edu).

Resources at CTE

Come by and take a look at some of the articles and books in our library. If you would like a copy of any of the articles abstracted below, contact the CTE (c.wehlburg@tcu.edu). You might be interested in:

[Composing a Learner Centered Syllabus](#) by Judith Grunert (Syracuse University). *This chapter from the book "The Course Syllabus" discusses form and content issues of a syllabus.*

[Learning in Community: The Conversation of Colleagues](#) by Parker Palmer. *This chapter from Palmer's "Courage to Teach" focuses on the need to have teaching become more than a "solo activity" performed in front of students. In other words, we might be better teachers if we could more easily access our colleagues. Palmer states "though we teach in front of students, we almost always teach solo, out of collegial sight....when we emerge, we rarely talk about what happened or what needs to happen next, for we have no shared experience to talk about."*

[Using Course Syllabi as Tools to Support Student Outcomes Assessment](#) by Edwin Imasuen (Martin University, Indianapolis). *As part of their assessment plan, Martin University faculty embarked on an effort to review all course syllabi. The goal for this effort was to create a syllabi that support student learning and outcomes assessment. This article discusses the method used at Martin University.*

Upcoming Events at CTE - Mark Your Calendars (and check out <http://www.cte.tcu.edu>)!

You should have already received the calendar for CTE's events in August (if not, let us know!). The September calendar will be out soon! Here are some of the upcoming events:

[Conversations on Teaching - Student Engagement: What do we know from NSSE \(National Student on Student Engagement\)](#). This brown bag lunch discussion will focus on the results of the most recent (2001) TCU student responses to NSSE. The issues deal with student in-class participation perceptions as well as other academic issues. Bring your lunch and enjoy conversation with your colleagues! (**September 2 from 12:00 - 1:00** in the CTE, SWR 501).

[Bits 'n Bytes - On-line Quizzes and Groups](#). Are you interested in using online quizzes or have your students work in groups in an online or web-enhanced course? Then come to this 30 minute session that will demonstrate these eCollege tools. (**September 9 from 3:00 - 3:30** in the CTE, SWR 501)