

'TEEC'HING

Teaching Effectiveness and Enhancement Newsletter

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FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

One of the main reasons I chose to teach at NKU was the university's commitment to civic engagement. If you haven't incorporated civic engagement into a class yet, I want to encourage you to give it a try. Yes, it might sound daunting. But I believe there are ways for us all to provide powerful educational experiences for our students while engaging with and assisting our communities.

To get started, reach out to your own network. Look to your neighborhood, to religious organizations, and to professional organizations. Then review your assignments and see what can be adapted. In my 400-level Documentary Production class, the second assignment has always been a group documentary production. By engaging with the community for this assignment, I hoped to give my students an experience that would mirror the ones they would soon have in their jobs.

I used social media to ask if anyone knew of an organization that would benefit from visual storytelling. I quickly got responses. A simple email and phone call later, and I had a very excited non-profit that was willing to work with our time frame and connect us to their clients. We were going to share the stories of 4 Paws for Ability, a group that provides service dogs to children and veterans with disabilities.

Student groups were matched with families. They learned about how the dogs had changed lives, and documented these stories in video. In completing their projects, the students connected with the families, they cared more about the end product, and they valued their experiences. I have never had a class willingly do more revisions and fine-tuning of an assignment. And their reflections made it clear that the project was valuable to them in a way that many school assignments are not.

Civic engagement also benefits me. Many of my research projects, grants, and speaking opportunities developed from connections I made through civic engagement activities. I've partnered with the University of Cincinnati, the United Way, the Saïd Business School at the University of Oxford, the Freedom Center, and more.

So, I encourage you to try. Start small. Yes, it can be more work. But the benefits are well worth it. I hope that NKU continues to encourage civic engagement, and that we as a faculty are supported to expand these efforts.



SARA DRABIK

**Assistant Professor
Communication**

**College of
Informatics**

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

My name is Nick Garcia and I am graduating this May with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Stage Management. I am currently an Office Assistant for the School of the Arts and a Mail Manager for University Housing. In addition, I am chair of a student organization I helped to create my sophomore year and the treasurer of a second organization I helped to form last year. In addition, I am a proud member of the Sigma Phi Epsilon Fraternity and actively involved within the theatre program.

NKU has proven to be the school I was meant to be at. Before going to college, I was about to go to another school in a different state and was initially unsure of if NKU was where I was meant to be. By the end of my freshman year, all the doubt had gone away and I was positive that I was meant to be at NKU. I've been able to get very involved in many student organizations and in the theatre program as well. Over the past four years I have worked on 15 productions within our theatre program and 11 professional theatre productions in various other locations.

What I have loved most about my time at NKU has been how supportive my faculty has been in achieving my dreams. The faculty provided me with unique opportunities whether it be studying abroad in London to working at the Santa Fe Opera in New Mexico. As I move forward to graduation and beyond, I will be thankful of everything that NKU has been able to provide me.

I hope that others that come after me will appreciate the unique opportunities that NKU has for them and the many doors that it will open.



TEACHING TIPS

Have you ever thought about having your students create a concept map? Concept maps establish meaning between ideas with linkage words. The actual making of the concept map takes a great deal of brain power and this begins the move of these concepts into long term memory storage. Concept mapping has also shown to be an advantage over outlines. While outlining connects ideas in only one direction, concept map encourages cross-linkage connections.

In order to make a concept map, students need to identify the concepts to be mapped. First, begin with a main concept and rank the remaining concepts from general to specific. Next, pick linking words such as "have," "are" and "like" to identify the relationships between concepts. To construct the actual map, begin by branching one or two general concepts from the main concept and add more specific concepts as the map progresses. Finally, look for opportunities to draw cross-linkages to concepts from different branches of the map.

For more information on the benefits of concept maps, examples, and templates visit The Institute for Human and Machine Cognition at <http://cmap.ihmc.us>

TEACHING CONVERSATION

As instructors, should we focus our main attention on course content or on students' learning and development? Some of you might say they are not mutually exclusive, and we should focus on both. I would wholeheartedly agree with that, but what if that is not what happens in reality? There are factors or pressures in the environment in which we operate that often lead us to focus more of our attention on course content rather than processes that might help students' learning and development.

First, we are typically trained in our doctoral programs as content experts. In fact, we are rewarded for publishing and advancing knowledge in our own disciplines. As such, we are much more comfortable focusing on what we are familiar with or what we are good at - knowledge dissemination. Also, there are a limited number of weeks in a semester, and we have to cover certain materials in the course if the course we are teaching is part of the sequence of the courses in the curriculum. If certain topics are taught in future courses, then it behooves us to teach that topic in our course so that students are prepared in their future courses. It is also easy to justify to your chairs and deans that you are covering certain materials in class, and you are doing a rigorous job of covering those materials. This is similar to companies hiring recent graduates with high GPAs since it is easy to "defend" your hiring decisions based on quantitative or "objective" data than some other intangible or "soft" factors.

However, what is being lost as a result of our focus on teaching content in our courses? What about focusing on processes in class that might help students learn and develop more? In other words, focusing on *how* we teach? What about non-content related activities or interventions in class that might help our students engage more with us and the course? What if you spend a certain amount of time each semester checking in with your students to see how they are doing in school and in their personal lives? Are you wasting your valuable class time doing something non-essential? Are these process-related activities being sacrificed or skipped because they are not content-specific or content-focused? Some will argue that it is not our job to be our students' caretakers. Our job is to teach them knowledge and skills in our disciplines. So, the course in chemistry should focus on chemistry and nothing else. Do you agree with such assessments? Are you willing to take a risk to spend time in your class on other things besides or beyond course content if it helps students engage more, learn more, or grow more? We think this is a conversation worth having in our learning community.

TECHNOLOGY TIPS

Colleges and universities around the country have been making efforts to ensure their course offerings are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). One way to take a significant step toward ADA compliance is to include a transcription of any recorded materials (e.g., lectures, videos, podcasts) used in your courses.

If, however, you don't have detailed lecture notes or a podcast script handy, don't fret - VoiceBase Transcription offers a solution. Signing up for a free account at www.voicebase.com automatically earns you up to 50 hours of audio transcription and 5 hours of video transcription at no cost. All you'll need is an MP3 file of your recording and an e-mail address (to alert you when the transcription is complete). After reviewing your transcript and making any necessary edits, you can easily download the text and make it available to your students.

BROWN BAG SESSIONS

*Attend and be entered for a chance to win a Kindle Fire
Drinks will be provided*

Mindfulness and Renewal

March 16th

UC 414

Noon-1:30pm

Facilitator: Jennifer Sharp

Dr. Jennifer Sharp specializes in integrating mindfulness-based approaches into counseling and counselor training. Highlights of her professional experience include: middle school counseling, leadership of campus-based peer education programs, and advocacy and counseling for trauma survivors.

Session Description: Practicing mindfulness can guide renewal of self as well as renewal of teaching practices. Join us for a discussion of contemplative practices and learn how they may be integrated with regular course content across all disciplines.

DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP

Broadening Students' Horizons: Cultivating multiple perspectives, social objectivity, and global thinking.

April 6, 2pm – 4pm, AC 722

April 7, 2pm – 4pm, AC 722

Faculty members hope university graduates will appreciate multiple perspectives, demonstrate social objectivity, and act with global thinking. Getting students to that point, however, isn't always an easy task, and faculty's roles in that process aren't always clear. This workshop will explore the importance of instilling meta-competencies in our students, and examine approaches, activities, and assignments that can help students broaden their horizons.

To register, email Amberly Nutini at hurstam@nku.edu.



Congratulations to Jeanne Pettit

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Flipping the Classroom
Kindle Fire HD 8 Raffle Winner