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## Round and Round and Round in the Circle Game

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# The Weekly Reader

*Teaching and Learning Center, Winthrop University, Rock Hill, SC*

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Authors 8/22

FERPA Training  
9/11, 9/12, 9/19

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## Round and Round and Round in the Circle Game

So, another school year begins.

A part of me says, "How many times have you done this? How can you do it again? How many more years do you plan on going around in this same crazy circle?" Round and round.

This year marks my twentieth year at Winthrop, but I have to add to that seven years at another college, as well as five years of a PhD program, two years of an MA, two years of high school teaching, four years of college, twelve years of school before that. I do not want to do the math, but I realize, with a shock, that I have been going around this crazy school circle since I was six years old! Round and round and round.

I know that some of you have been at this game even longer than I have. Most of you have not. But all of us, faculty and staff who work in a college setting, are stuck in this endless circle. Starting up again, preparing, first day,

first week, first month, another semester, then another, then another. Round and round and round in the circle game.

That was the cynical part of me asking those questions about going around the circle again. It was also the egocentric part. Who says this thing called my life is all about me?

I sat down for lunch with a few colleagues today in Thomson. A young woman was sitting in the middle of the table, and as we all sat down, we ended up near her. Most students would have probably run away, but this student did not. She is a freshman. She is a biology major, pre-med, with plans to become a pediatrician. She is very excited about starting out on her long journey—or the next steps on that journey, since she has already come a long way. She fairly bubbled as she talked to each of us old-timers. We smiled a bit at her exuberance, but I suspect I am not the only

one at that table who was infected with her enthusiasm. I remember feeling that way, long ago. In a random lunchroom encounter, she gave that back to me.

I spoke to the new faculty group last Friday. It is a large group, filling a classroom in the West Center. Some of them have taught elsewhere, but for most of them, this is their first job. A couple of them defended dissertations as recently as two weeks ago. I know their excitement, as well as their anxiety: all of these new people to meet, all of these procedures that everyone else seems already to know. Having their own classes, most of them for the first time ever. I am very far down the road they are about to travel, but I can look back and see myself in their places. It is a long and winding road they are beginning to travel, but as my grandfather used to say, it's a good road. Step confidently onto that path, our young colleagues. And please remember that

*“Take all that newness and excitement and anxiety and multiply it by 1200—approximately the number of new students this year. Can you feel that energy, radiating all over campus, a campus that is coming to full life again?”*



## Continued from page 1

there are many of us who have tread in those steps and are more than willing to help you here and there. Because of you, I feel excitement again, anxiety again, even though I have been around the circle so many more times than you. Thank you for that!

Across campus, new staff members are just beginning new jobs. I have not met you yet, but I will, I hope. You have some wise but jaded old timers around you too. Infect them with your enthusiasm. I suspect you already have. Over here in Dinkins, the energy from all the University College activities is palpable.

And of course, we have a new president at Winthrop. I met Dr. Jayne Comstock for the first time only last week, but I have already been in her presence three times since then. This is the first time around the Winthrop circle for President Comstock, but not her first time around the academic circle. She told the trustees yesterday that she had given 19 speeches in the last 21 days. (That was right before she added speech 20, at Convocation.) You do not have to be around her much to know how very excited she is to start this new job, this new

position, this new challenge. Like the new student and the new faculty, our new president has already reinvigorated me. Her excitement about our new future has infected me, as I can tell it has infected the whole campus.

Take all that newness and excitement and anxiety and multiply it by 1200—approximately the number of new students this year. Can you feel that energy, radiating all over campus, a campus that is coming to full life again? Sometimes I imagine the energy even reaches into the stately old trees that cover our campus. Do they soak it up through their roots? I feel like I do.

“The Circle Game” is a Joni Mitchell song. It has been running through my head for the last week or so, as I work on syllabi and go to meetings and, now, as I go off to my first class. The chorus goes like this:

And the seasons they go  
round and round  
And the painted ponies go  
up and down  
We're captive on the  
carousel of time  
We can't return, we can  
only look  
Behind from where we  
came

And go round and round  
and round  
In the circle game.

The Circle Game can be happy or sad, depending on your point of view and mood. Sometimes hearing it makes me wistful for the past. Most times it makes me as happy as I was when I was six years old and going round and round on the carousel at the old Myrtle Beach Pavilion. That is how I feel now, this week, as we start up the circle game again—thanks to all the new faces here, all the new people, all the new enthusiasm.

I don't know about you, but I ready to infect my students with that enthusiasm, that joy and longing for learning, once again, round and round and round in the circle game.



## XXITE 2.0 ----- The Virtual Gathering Place for WU (The Reboot!)

Jo Koster and I invite you to join XXITE (Twenty-first Century Teaching Excellence)—or if you have already joined, to check it out again as it grows and develops. Maybe you have not been there in a long time—if not, you will see many changes in look and content. For example, XXITE now has groups dedicated to HMXP and CRTW, with

those of us who teach those courses sharing ideas and materials. Talk to Jo about setting up your own interest group. Jo is particularly interested in recruiting a few people to blog regularly about their teaching.

Jo set up this interactive site to give Winthrop faculty a virtual gathering space to share ideas about teaching and

technology. You'll find blogs and discussion forums on various topics—and we urge you to add your own ideas. Visit again at <http://wuxxite.ning.com/> Or email Jo Koster for an invitation to join: [kosterj@winthrop.edu](mailto:kosterj@winthrop.edu) The TLC website also has links to navigate your way there or to join: <http://www2.winthrop.edu/tlc/>

## A New Service From the TLC: Teaching Consultation

The Teaching and Learning Center is offering a new service: teaching consultation. At the instructor's request, I (or another agreed-upon person) will visit your class to observe and consult with you afterwards about your successes and challenges. This consultation has nothing to do with the tenure and

promotion process, and no reports will be made to department chairs or deans (unless you so request). The invitation to the consultant can only come from the instructor, not from a dean or chair or any other person. All conversations will be private and confidential. If you don't want me to visit your class and observe your teaching, we could

just meet and talk about your teaching. If I am not available to visit your class because of my schedule, I will find a qualified person to do the consulting. So please let me know if you would like to invite me into your class or for a consultation. Call or email me at (803) 323-3679 or [birdj@winthrop.edu](mailto:birdj@winthrop.edu).

## Go2Knowledge—Learning On Demand!

Go2Knowledge is a website that offers a variety of video presentations on faculty and staff professional development. You will find presentations by nationally-known experts in seven categories: At-Risk Populations, Campus Safety, Organizational Development, Student Success, Teaching and Learning, Technology,

and Open Educational Resources. Within each category, you will find a number of excellent and informative videos. The Office of Academic Affairs has provided us a one-year subscription to this service.

People often tell the TLC that they would like to go to sessions, but they don't have the time or they can't

at the times sessions are offered. With Go2Knowledge, you can attend sessions on demand, anywhere, 24/7. The TLC will also have frequent Go2Knowledge Groups, where we meet to discuss a presentation. Log in here: <http://www.go2knowledge.org/winthrop> See you there!

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**BLOG POSTS**

- NEW POSTS ON THE RENOVATIONS**  
Posted by [Mark Y. Herring](#) on June 22, 2012 at 2:05pm
- CORE VALUES**  
Posted by [Mark Y. Herring](#) on June 5, 2012 at 9:41am
- PLAYING TO TYPE**  
Posted by [Blaiz C. Harding](#) on May 25, 2012 at 10:22am
- TEACHING CRITICAL THINKING IN THE CLASSROOM**  
Posted by [Amanda Hiler](#) on March 15, 2012 at 12:11pm — 1 Comment
- GONE WITH THE WIND...**  
Posted by [Jo Koster](#) on March 6, 2012 at 10:33am — 2 Comments

+ Add a Blog Post

**NOTES**

- DO COLLEGE PROFESSORS WORK HARD ENOUGH?**  
Created by [Jo Koster](#) Mar 25, 2012 at 1:34pm. Last updated by [Jo Koster](#)
- WHO OWNS YOUR COURSE?**  
Created by [Jo Koster](#) Mar 19, 2012 at 12:07pm. Last updated by [Jo Koster](#)
- STUDENT OWNERSHIP OF TABLETS INCREASES PREFERENCE FOR GROWING**  
Created by [Jo Koster](#) Mar 14, 2012 at 11:24am. Last updated by [Jo Koster](#)

Join XXITE 2.0 or  
Register for a TLC  
Session  
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## Thought for The Week

*"There is a time for some things, and a time for all things; a time for great things, and a time for small things."*  
--Cervantes