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Reflections on the 3rd Annual Winthrop Conference on Teaching and Learning: My Day at the Conference

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The Weekly Reader

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

Reflections on the 3rd Annual Winthrop Conference on Teaching and Learning: My Day at the Conference

The 3rd Annual Winthrop Conference on Teaching and Learning was a big success. Held on our campus on Saturday, February 6, 2016, the conference had 102 people registered, mainly faculty and staff from Winthrop, but also including an increased number of colleagues from area colleges and universities.

I want to reflect on my experience of the conference. With five concurrent sessions in each of the five time slots, I had to choose which sessions I would attend, which was truly a hard choice. In each time slot, I had multiple sessions I really wanted to go to. That, to me, is the mark of a good conference: when you have to make painful choices about where to spend your time.

I had no choice in the first session, "Critical Reading and Thinking Across the Curriculum," since I was the final presenter. First up was Katarina Moyon, "How HMXP Has Changed My Approach to Teaching." Katarina talked about the way teaching our required course, The Human Experience, has changed the way she teaches her political science courses, particularly the way she emphasizes and teaches critical reading. I have had a very similar experience: teaching CRTW, our course in critical thinking, has changed the way I teach my literature courses.

Next was Amanda Hiner, "Critical Reading, Critical Research: Practical Strategies to Develop Critical Reading Skills in Student Researchers." Amanda applied critical reading to student research and writing, offering helpful strategies and in-class exercises. I finished the session with "'How Can I Get My Students to Go Below the Surface?': Deep Learning Across the Curriculum Using the Elements of Reasoning." I talked about the way we can use the foundation building block of CRTW, the elements of reasoning, in any of our disciplines. This session was another step in taking the general education core that all our students experience and spreading it across the curriculum.

The second session I went to was "Engaging Students with Engaging Technology," one of the most popular sessions of the day. Jo Koster started off with "Getting the Picture: Engaging Student Learning Using Pinterest," an intriguing and interesting teaching approach. Even though I had never seen Pinterest before, I am considering using her ideas in some of my literature courses. Allison Gibson followed with "Engaging Students into Lifelong Learning Using Social Media," an excellent overview of social media and the ways it can enhance student learning. Finally, two colleagues from Limestone College, Susan Moore and Janet Ward, demonstrated a platform Limestone uses to enhance student success. I am a strong advocate of engaging students any way we can, and finding out about ways to use

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emerging social media to do that was very interesting to me.

Then it was lunch time, where, following an excellent buffet luncheon, our new president, Dr. Dan Mahony, gave the keynote address, starting off by telling us what a bad teacher he was when he first started, and how he got better. His speech was humorous, engaging, and inspiring, and it certainly made me glad that we have a president who is so committed to teaching, to teaching and learning, and to professional development.

After lunch, I conducted a workshop on successful class discussion. We talked about the challenges and benefits of class discussion, then I shared some ideas on overcoming those problems and making class discussion work better. We had a lively discussion about discussion, and I might offer the session again later this semester if there is any interest.

In the penultimate session, "Hybrid, Online, and Beyond," Nick Grossoehme and Marguerite Doman demonstrated "The WUtopia! Effect," an online platform they

developed to enhance student learning. Their platform makes student viewing of online videos an interactive and learning situation, and they would welcome others using the platform in their classes.

They were followed by Kathleen Burke, "Organizing the Online Course." Kathleen drew on her vast experience in designing and delivering online courses, giving us helpful strategies, good advice, and a number of things to do and not to do. Maria Aysa-Lastra talked about "Quantitative Reasoning for the Social Science Classroom," arguing persuasively that quantitative reasoning is essential in developing higher order reasoning skills.

The day ended for me with "New Approaches to Global Learning," starting with a presentation by Scot Rademaker, Marleah Bouchard, and Bettie Parsons Barger, "Collaborating Locally, Going Global, and Researching with Purpose: Winthrop's KDP Chapter's Vision for Enriching the Next Generation." They told us about the efforts of Kappa Delta Pi, the education honor organization, to connect local teachers with university students, to

create opportunities for international teaching experiences, and to provide opportunities for meaningful undergraduate research. Next, Seth Jenny, Scot Rademaker, and Geraldine Jenny (from Slippery Rock University) gave a joint presentation, "Transformational Perceptions of International Service Learning Projects: India and the Dominican Republic." Their pictures of our students and students at Slippery Rock interacting with young students abroad were heartwarming and inspiring. Finally, Antje Mays presented "Winthrop, Fount of Knowledge," an overview of employer needs locally and globally, and some of the ways we might change our curriculum and our instruction to meet those needs.

It was a full day, ending a bit after 5:30 pm, but it was truly a fulfilling day. I only experienced one-fifth of the conference, but I went away exhilarated, inspired, and energized. Yes, the conference was local, but it was a real conference, and among the best conferences I have attended and participated in, mainly because its focus was on the core of our mission at Winthrop, at any university: teaching, and learning how to be better teachers.

Thanks For Helping Make the Teaching and Learning Center Work!

Winthrop's Teaching and Learning Center offers a wide variety of sessions each year for faculty and staff, on teaching, technology, professional development, and personal development. From leading class discussion to mastering the Smart podium to tenure and promotion to cooking soufflés, the TLC tries to make sure that all faculty and staff receive the kinds of professional and personal development that will make them better teachers, administrators, and employees.

To offer this programming, the TLC depends on the talent, expertise, and generosity of our faculty and staff. We do not have a big budget to bring in outside speakers and experts. Even so, we are able to offer engaging, timely, and valuable sessions every year on a variety of topics. We thank those who have offered their time and talent in past years.

If you have a request for a session you would like to see, please email me and I will try to arrange it. And if you have a session you would like to present, please email me. We will set something up as soon as we can!

A Service From the TLC: Teaching Consultation

The TLC for several years has been offering a 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 (803) 323-3679 or 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!

Register for a TLC Session At
www.winthrop.edu/tlc

The 3rd Annual Winthrop Conference on Teaching and Learning

Many thanks to everyone who attended and presented at our conference on Saturday, February 6. We had 102 attendees, who heard excellent presentations and an inspiring keynote speech by Dr. Dan Mahony. Special thanks to Dana Bruneau for her work in organizing the conference.

Thought For the Week

"If we would learn what the human race really is at bottom, we need only observe it in election times."
--Mark Twain