

End-of-Program Review Workshop June 2012
Compelling Intellectual Experience or Innovative Pedagogy 2006-11
By John Mc Lain, Allen Olsen, Lisa Sweet

Our group examined the narratives provided by faculty from 2006 to 2011 on the following open-ended survey question: *For the purpose of helping faculty reflect on the range of teaching practices and experiences at the college, please identify the most compelling intellectual experience (s) in your program or the most innovative pedagogical practice in your program.* We (arbitrarily?) chose four categories for distilling narratives since this was the first five-year cycle in which this question was included in the survey.

“Tried-and-True”	Learning activities included writing, reading, seminars, lectures, films, exams, research projects (group or individual).
Technology Use	Included wikis, Moodles, podcasts, and broadcast media forms. This category drew on the recent emphasis of technology in education in the country, as well as TESC’s increased investment in new technologies.
“Real World Experiences”	Included travel, field studies, research for presentation at conferences, exhibitions of original work, public performances, internships, community-based work.
“Multiple Modes of Inquiry”	Programs included more than one disciplinary method; more than one learning style (visual, textual, aural, movement)

Distributions (330* programs)

Some program narratives met more than one category, and thus were counted twice, once in each category.

T-and-T: 183 (55%)
Technology: 21 (7 %)
Real World Experience: 66 (20 %)
Multiple Modes: 38 (*in 209 programs) = 38 (18 %)

Selected Responses

Students “read, reread, analyzed researched recited a novel prior to attending...” a professional theater performance based on the text. Students were unusually “prepared intellectually and emotionally invested” audience. Following the performance, students ‘seminared’ with the actors about the play/text. (*Embodying the Book*, 2008-09)

A few programs gave students authority/responsibility to design major components of the curriculum, in consultation with faculty (planning extended field trips in *Living in Extreme Environments*, 2006-07, and small student group working with faculty to negotiate curriculum evaluate and plan class activities in *Justice at Work?* 2007-08)

On the value of faculty seminar: a faculty who taught alone for the first time in 16 years, joined Jules Unsel and Sarah Pedersen for faculty seminar. Doing so enhanced the faculty’s learning and enabled him/her to bring back to students interesting ideas that enriched the teaching/learning for both faculty and students. (*American Literature of the 1850s*, 2007-08)

Intensive one quarter economics program: economic theory as religion and ideology. Full-time format supported an examination of economics not possible in a traditional economics course at a conventional college. (*Foundations of Economics*, 2007-08)

“SOS model is far superior to ILCs – every student in the program will agree”. Enabled intermediate and advanced students to design their own learning, plus engage in peer-supported learning. (*SOS Community Development*, 2010-11)

Students rotated writing an abstract/summary of each seminar which was handed out in the following seminar. This improved the equality of the seminars, gave students practice distilling the most important points. (*Spain and the Americas*, 2008-09)

Students applied political theory (Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau) to ‘reality in Greek, Roman and French societies. They saw the promise and limits of democracy.

Seminars and final exam study groups were my students reported the most compelling intellectual experiences for them. I had two especially effective pedagogical practices. (1) was an addition to the usual practice of having students revise papers. First they turned in a thesis statement and a list of 5 piece of evidence they would use. Then they turned in their best (not first) draft, to which I replied with a 1-2-page written critique. They wrote me a response letter, explaining how they would handle my criticisms and suggestions. Only then did they revise. The addition of the letter really helped with their revisions. (2) I am a confirmed believe in giving three-hour, closed book final exams. They are not evaluated on a curve, so I encourage students to form study groups to strategize about the best answers to the 15 sample essay questions and 20 IDs I hand out. They tell me that, to their surprise, this is one of the best parts of the class because they realize how much they have learned and are able to synthesize it in ways that seminars don't allow. (*Growing Up American*, 2007-08)

Considerations

Many faculty responded to the question with summaries of program curriculum, or statements indicating the ‘whole program was compelling’ or innovative and thus difficult to tease out one example.

Multiple modes of inquiry may be taken so much for granted that faculty don’t isolate this as innovative or compelling; we may not be doing as much of it as we claim; faculty don’t recognize when they work across modes, disciplines (authentically).