

ON TEACHING



Preparing Future Scholars: Questions for Graduate Faculty

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“The task of the excellent teacher is to stimulate ‘apparently ordinary’ people to unusual effort. The tough problem is not in identifying winners: it is in making winners out of ordinary people”

—K. Patricia Cross

“Graduate education prepares the knowledge creators and innovators of tomorrow with the skills, expertise, and cultural awareness needed to compete effectively in the knowledge-based global economy. The work of graduate students contributes directly to sustained economic growth, prosperity, and national security.” (Council of Graduate Schools, 2007). This statement, taken from a recent CGS publication, Graduate Education, The Backbone of American Competitiveness and Innovation, creates a definition of graduate education that moves beyond the traditional university definition of knowledge for knowledge’s sake and creates an important dilemma for the professoriate by linking the creation of new knowledge to economic prosperity and national security. Entrepreneurial, experiential, service learning and other similar buzzwords are emerging to define how we teach or even what we teach. In teaching undergraduate students, we create foundations built on existing knowledge and creative scholarship of others. We do this in a fairly prescriptive manner by providing a defined curriculum which students are expected to follow. Students who complete their program are deemed sufficiently knowledgeable to enter the workforce in their chosen field. In contrast, teaching of graduate students does not always follow a prescribed curriculum. Nonetheless, we have responsibilities to our students and stakeholders that cannot be overlooked by us, the educators. Against this background, I have chosen to discuss a few key points that, in my opinion, need

to be at the forefront of every graduate advisor’s agenda. This is by no means intended to be an inclusive or rank-ordered list. Instead, I view it as fundamental questions to ask yourself as you guide your students through completion of their graduate degree program.

Do you know the goals of your graduate degree program and can you articulate to your students how your program addresses these goals in the context of your discipline? It is not uncommon for the flexibility of graduate programs and the need to be creative/innovative to result in students and faculty losing sight of the goals of their program. To this end, it is imperative for graduate faculty to fully understand what outcomes have been defined for their degree programs and that each program has a desired outcome. Specifically, you should have a clear perspective on the differences between graduate certificates, thesis based master’s, non-thesis based master’s, and terminal degrees (e.g., M.F.A., Ed.D, D.A. or Ph.D.). Each degree should be as different as the students who enroll in them. These outcomes should be consistently articulated in the academic catalog, assessment plans, program reviews as well as other places such as mission statements and accreditation documents. As a member of your program faculty you should share ownership of your program, even if you are new. Remember that your graduate students have subscribed to your program, not your agenda.

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Are the stated goals of your graduate degree program being met? More importantly, what is the basis for your answer? These questions are particularly timely as we approach a focused visit on assessment from the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. As a member of your program’s faculty, you contribute to the outcome. While your teaching methods may vary from those of your colleagues, your outcomes are measured collectively in your graduates. Monitor outcomes, critically evaluate outcomes and make adjustments in your practices to stay aligned with your program goals. Your students will benefit from outcome driven approaches to teaching.

Are you confident in your abilities to supervise the research of your graduate students? Does your interaction with your graduate students help or hinder their progress? You may be wondering what this has to do with effective teaching of graduate students; after all things were much tougher when you were in graduate school. Or were they? The most important issue that you will deal with on a daily basis is that graduate students will challenge you. They will challenge your knowledge base, your “expert opinion”, and your research. It is your responsibility as a mentor to engage, encourage, and welcome scholarly exchange. Keep in mind that scholarly exchange does not always translate into agreement. However, you must also remember that your reaction to a scholarly debate may be misinterpreted by your students to be an impediment to their progress. Your skill in handling scholarly debate

will clearly determine the outcome. If you don’t know the answer, say so. If your argument is flawed, admit it. Your student will learn from you and you will learn from your student. After all, one of our goals as graduate faculty is to develop the next generation of “knowledge creators.”

Are your students socialized into their chosen field of study? One of the most important things that you will impart to your students is a knowledge of academia, research, or the profession that they are aspiring to enter. To this end, it is important that they gain knowledge of the inner workings of their profession. Publishing, presenting research, peer reviewing, teaching, grant writing and understanding professional boundaries are but a few of the requisite skills that graduate students rarely learn in the classroom. Most students acquire these skills through regular interaction with their faculty, participation at conferences, and interaction with their peers. Involve your students in your department and profession. It is important to their success.

“...remember that your academic legacy is your students. Make it a good one!”

In closing this discussion, I wish to point out that it was all too brief. I have attempted to identify matters that broadly influence our goals as educators of the “knowledge creators and innovators of tomorrow.” Approaches to effective graduate mentoring are many and can differ widely between as well as within programs. However you choose to approach it, remember that your academic legacy is your students. Make it a good one!

Just a reminder: The Outstanding Faculty Awards Committee will be accepting nominations until 4:00 pm, Friday, November 16th. Please help us reward excellence by nominating an individual faculty member or department for one of these prestigious awards. To find out more, or to [submit your nomination online](http://www.awards.und.edu/), visit <http://www.awards.und.edu/>

Do you have an undergraduate or graduate student who you believe has potential to be or become a good candidate for a national scholarly award?

Joan Hawthorne, Assistant Provost, is UND’s representative for nationally competitive awards (see info at http://www.und.edu/dept/vpaa/National_Scholarship/) and your help in identifying outstanding student candidates is greatly appreciated. The best candidates will be strong academically but will also have other strengths and experiences, perhaps in areas like undergraduate research, community service, or political activism.

Please encourage students who might be interested in the challenge and reward of competing for a national scholarship or fellowship to contact Joan at joan_hawthorne@und.nodak.edu or 777-4684.

Summer Instructional Development Professorships

The Faculty Instructional Development Committee (FIDC) each year awards a number of Summer Instructional Development Professorships (funded by the UND Alumni Association and Foundation) to faculty working on innovative instructional projects. Designed to allow faculty to work full-time on instructional development for four weeks during the summer, the professorships provide a stipend of \$3000. To be eligible, faculty must commit to spending four weeks of full-time summer work on their projects, typically focusing on a course or courses to be offered the following academic year.

Proposals will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

~rationale (for new course or course revision) is well-established

~proposed pedagogy is consistent with best practices in higher education

~plans to conduct, document and assess work are clear and reasonable

For more information on the application procedure and to view a list of 2007 awardees and their projects, visit the OID web site: <http://www.und.edu/dept/oid/> or call 7-3325.

Proposals for Summer 2008 professorships are due February 1, 2008.

If you're considering applying for a Summer Instructional Development Professorship (SIDP), the basic guidelines are featured above and more detailed instructions are available on the OID web site (<http://www.und.edu/dept/oid/funding.htm>). Both Professors Ju Kim (Physics) and Gayle Baldwin (Philosophy and Religion) recently conducted Summer Professorships, Dr. Kim in 2006 and Dr. Baldwin in 2007, and their projects illustrate the range of work that SIDP's fund.

One criteria for SIDP projects is a well-articulated rationale for either the creation of a course or revision of an existing course. Dr. Kim's project, "Developing [a] non-calculus based modern physics course for future secondary science teachers," articulated a very concrete need for a new course that resonates among those who work closely with future teachers and the College of Education and Human Development. With increased licensure requirements, high school science teachers now need a minimum of 12 university credits in the subject area they teach. Many who need these credits struggle with math prerequisites for existing courses, and Dr. Kim's new course, College Physics III, would offer another option to those students. The course dovetails with the current curriculum in the Physics Department as the final in a three semester college physics sequence. With an eye towards student outcomes that will produce better high school science teaching, Dr. Kim incorporated technological models into his labs.

Dr. Baldwin's project, "Assessing Student Learning in Constructive Religious Ethics," brought innovation pedagogical strategies to the complex ethical questions and decisions that students face both inside and outside the classroom. Seeking to place student's course work into a larger context of global ethics was challenging and

Dr. Baldwin devoted considerable thought to the construction of class exercises to "teach students to develop a constructive ethics proposal that will serve as a structure by which they can make ethical decisions in the 'real' world." In her proposal, Dr. Baldwin discusses the difficulties of assessing students' development in this area. She engages insights from the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) to bring best practices to the specific assessment challenges her courses present.

Each SIDP recipient is asked to write a final report describing their work and the student learning outcomes that resulted. Dr Kim outlined his efforts to utilize innovative technologies in lab experiments that would not only be useful to his students, but to their students as well. The College of Arts and Sciences approved College Physics III (Physics 213) as a new course and Dr. Kim is teaching it this fall. Overall, Dr. Kim has found that "the general response of the students has been that this course is very helpful."

In her final report, Dr. Baldwin discussed some of the pedagogical resources she was able to incorporate into her proposed courses, including a unique assessment tool. Dr. Baldwin also discovered that the process of assessing student learning around these broad and complex learning goals offered a rewarding opportunity to reflect on her teaching philosophy. Ultimately she strives to give students the skills that will allow them to use their learning from her courses outside of the classroom as they consider ethical issues.

If you have an idea for an SIDP project and would like to discuss it before submitting a proposal, please call the Office of Instructional Development at 777-3325 or email oid@und.nodak.edu.

ON TEACHING
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On Teaching

Box Lunch Discussion Series

Fall 2007

All sessions take place in the River Valley Room of the Union unless otherwise noted. Wednesday sessions run from 12-1. Tuesday and Thursday sessions run from 12:30-1:30. To register and receive a free box lunch, please call Jana Hollands at 777-4998 by noon two business days prior to the event.

Sessions are open on a first-come, first-served basis.

Thu. Nov. 15	12:30-1:30	<i>Encouraging Ethical Behavior in Class</i> (register Tue. by noon)
Wed. Nov. 28	12:00-1:00	<i>Teaching in the Capstone</i> (register Mon. by noon)

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