



TEACHING MATTERS

newsletter

Fall 2015

Teaching Philosophy
(D. Creelman).....2

Faculty Excellence Award for
Teaching (FEAT).....4

Departmental Award for
Teaching Excellence.....4

Statement of Educational
Leadership Philosophy
(D. Roach).....5

Teaching Philosophy
(E. Civi).....7

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l. to r. Dale Roach, David Creelman, Emin Civi

University teachers and educational leaders can be recognised both within their own institutions and on a wider stage. The Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE) administers the very prestigious 3M Awards for Educational Leadership, of which ten are awarded across Canada each year. The Association of Atlantic Universities (AAU) has both the Anne Marie MacKinnon Award for Educational Leadership (one per year), and their award for Excellence in Teaching (two per year). Only a limited number of candidates can be nominated by their universities, which in our

case means UNB as a whole. This year, here at UNB Saint John we are celebrating three winners of these awards: 3M winner David Creelman (Humanities and Languages), AAU Educational Leadership winner Dale Roach (Engineering), and AAU Excellence in Teaching winner Emin Civi (Business). These three are carrying on UNB Saint John's strong teaching tradition, and it is noteworthy that they represent each of our three faculties (Arts, SASE and Business), showing that our excellent teaching culture extends throughout our entire campus. This is also shown by the winners of the Departmental Awards for Teaching Excellence (DATEs) and of the Faculty Excellence Awards for Teaching (FEATs) that are given out here at UNB Saint John; please see the list of winners in this issue, and congratulations to them all!

In this issue of Teaching Matters, therefore, we are celebrating David, Dale and Emin - and picking their brains, too. The bulk of this issue consists of their teaching and/or educational leadership philosophies, and they have also each contributed a quick description of a teaching tool that they find useful. Their educational philosophies are evocative of their underlying personalities and backgrounds: Emin, the marketing professor, is concerned with motivating his students to learn better; Dale, the engineer, works to encourage a safe environment in which to build; David, lover of literature, expresses his joy in every aspect of his life, from committee meetings to classrooms. Their teaching tools provide short examples of how they apply these philosophies. Feel free to borrow them! All three of our award winners are motivated and happy to be of service... and we're glad to be building and learning along with them.

Lucy and Ken

Teaching Philosophy

Dr. David Creelman

Throughout my time here at UNB Saint John, even when things have been marked by stress or sorrow, I have always looked forward to teaching my next set of classes. Why does being in the classroom make me so happy? Well, partly because there is a real joy that comes when someone understands something new and engaging, and you've had a chance to help them toward that moment. But I also think it is because teaching, for me at least, reaffirms some of my core convictions about life; that as people we are free, we are capable of renewal, and we are curiously communal.

My wife, Gina, is a social worker and we frequently have an argument as to whether people are capable of change. She works with individual clients and thinks change is possible. I spend my time examining literary and historical texts and it often seems that people are pre-destined by the social and cultural forces around them. But my philosophic rationale – that if we are free, it is only in very small ways – must be at least a little disingenuous, because when I step into a classroom, I really do share Gina's optimism. I love that university professors of literature have near total freedom to set their syllabi, select their texts, address cultural and historical contexts, and find ways to bring stories to life for students. I love that our students can choose to come, or not; to participate or not; but I am also free to set up a course that rewards them when they take risks, become engaged, and begin to think and feel something unexpected. I love that I can try new things, like co-teaching a Joyce-Beckett course with Sandra Bell or a Harry Potter course with Miriam Jones, and then find out what parts succeed and what parts fail, knowing that we'll have a chance to try again. I have no philosophic foundation for this assertion, but I believe that freedom and risking failure are closely connected. If I confuse my students, I know I can come back next class and clarify. In the same way, I want to give my students freedom. I want them to talk to me about their papers, to write and share drafts, rewrite and revise arguments. Freedom is about getting several chances to succeed. If that means that sometimes there is a lot to mark, that's okay; my class sizes are reasonable and I get paid a good salary, so really, what right have I to whine? Whether in class, in discussion groups, or in written as-

signments, I want to establish a dynamic that reminds students that they are free to risk and express their views. After all, the great thing about a poem, play, or novel, is that there are weak readings, strong readings, and compelling readings...but there few wrong readings. So first and foremost university education is about freedom.

I have been teaching university for twenty-four years. Perhaps someday I will tire of it, but at the moment my wife knows that I'm certainly not looking forward to early retirement. A big part of my joy in the classroom is the fact that teaching in a university requires renewal. Goethe asserted that "we must always change, renew, rejuvenate ourselves; otherwise we harden." When I started teaching, I consciously tried to steal and implement at least one good teaching idea each term. The format of my discussion group questions was borrowed from our James Noble. An assignment which requires first year students to find, summarize, and use a scholarly article was lifted (with an appropriate citation) from my colleague Sandra Bell's syllabus. I have developed some techniques which help me communicate my love of literature and my research to my students, but in so many ways I have just scratched the surface. While I do things like attend brown-bag discussions and go to conferences to learn about new teaching methods, we ultimately do not know in advance what will lead to deep rejuvenation. Last year, in one of my first year courses, I had a student who needed some particular accommodations. In the process of reworking my tests and essay assignments, I realized that my handouts were often unnecessarily wordy and ambiguous. When I reworked my material for one person who needed things to be concise, I was forced to rethink all of my quiz questions, essay topics, and exams. When I cut the filler for one student, I think it clarified matters for all my students. I've discovered what I suspect my colleagues in Biology have known all along: we must let something tired die in order for something better to grow. We have to learn to both trim and create. I suspect this is one of the reasons I use formal debates in most of my classes. By limiting my students to a three minute opening argument, they have to make the hard decisions about what ideas to cut in order to really refine their best material. Given that my profes-

sion requires me to constantly toss and experiment, how could I not feel refreshed and renewed by the process of teaching?

Finally, I love that people are both curious and communal. As individuals it sometimes seems that we are confined by our own experience and required to make sense of our world in our own unique way. As a child of the seventies, I grew up believing that individuality and difference was essential. What I really enjoy about the students of the last decade is that they are more comfortable with their craving for connection. Universities confirm that while all of us are unique, we are never alone. Whenever a new class starts I feel nervous, and when my students come through the door I can see they are a bit nervous too. We don't know each other yet. But it is surprising how quickly people can begin to bond. When I can get to that point (sometimes after weeks of class) that I can greet each person by name, I am surprised how quickly the class responds and connects. I accept Aristotle's premise that humans are uniquely mimetic and curious. Though we view our communities through our own distinct lens, we long to expand our own views of the world. Humans have an innate, instinctual need to push a little beyond the boundaries that confine and

David's Teaching Tool

Students in introductory courses struggle to learn and use the technical languages of each specific discipline. In a poetry class this is particularly true. "The Poetry Game" encourages students to learn and to identify figures of speech and metrical devices. When we play this game in class, I buy a bag of chocolate bars as the prize. The money is well spent when I hear my students ask each other, "how is a simile different from a metaphor?" and actually care about the answer. The following game is taken verbatim from my first year course. Each group gets their own section of poem to work on, and can "steal" from a particular passage assigned to another group.

"The Poetry Game."

"Your group will be responsible for seven or eight lines of poetry. Examine your passage and identify the meaning of your section (worth 5 points), and all images which are used within those lines (1 point per image). Additional points will be given if you can identify any figures of speech (ie. simile, metaphor, metonymy, symbol, personification, hyperbole, allusion, paradox, etc...). You will also be given a passage from which you can steal points. Examine those lines as well and be prepared to identify any images or figures of speech the other team misses. In the case of a tie, groups will be asked to discuss the rhythm or sound devices of their section, so do not include either of these items in your initial analysis.

Prize: The team with the highest score will win a gift bag of chocolate bars."

define us. I am convinced that we seek intuitively to test ourselves within and against a larger community, and given that conviction, my style of teaching and my style of leadership is ultimately embedded in collaborative approaches. I divide every class I teach into groups of five or six students because if we get to know another person's name and work with them on a significant task, then we'll begin to share our ideas, discover our abilities, hone our skills, and figure out how to succeed.

The forces of modernity and even postmodernity try to convince us – as the great band Nirvana noted – that "all we are is all alone." Our daily experience within a university tells us that this is just not true. For the brief terms that our students are with us, we get to share ideas, experiences, and emotions. We are restored and renewed when we encounter the best sides of each other. As Tom Wayman writes – and I'm editing a bit here – "Contained in this classroom / is a microcosm of human existence / assembled for you to query and examine and ponder. / This is not the only place where such an opportunity has been gathered / but it [is] one place." I count myself among the privileged to be teaching in this place.

2014 Faculty Excellence Award for Teaching (FEAT)

Please note: 2015 not yet awarded

Arts	Mustapha Ibn Boamah	Economics
Science, Applied Science & Engineering	Shelley Doucet	Nursing & Health Sciences
Business	Lee Jolliffe	Hospitality & Tourism Management

2015 Departmental Award for Teaching Excellence (DATE)

Arts	Paul-Emile Chiasson	Social Science
	David Lane	Psychology
	J.P. Lewis	History & Politics
	Pedro Serrano	Humanities & Languages
Business	Emin Civi	Marketing
	Dan Doiron	Business Strategy & Small Business
Science, Applied Science & Engineering	Tim Alderson	Mathematical Sciences
	Phil Backman	Physics
	John Johnson	Biology
	Nancy Logue	Nursing & Health Sciences
	Connie Stewart	Computer Science & Applied Statistics
	Byron Walton	Engineering

Statement of Educational Leadership Philosophy

Dr. Dale C. Roach

We all have the choice to lead or not. So the question becomes: Why does someone choose to lead? I believe the answer is, fundamentally, that they believe strongly enough in something that they want to take action and are willing to take on the responsibility of being a leader. Such is the case for me with regards to teaching. When I was young I simply wanted to be led. As I matured, however, opportunities to assume leadership roles presented themselves and, with support from my peers and mentors, I found myself taking them on and have grown to enjoy being a leader and helping those around me succeed.

My values and beliefs about teaching can be summarized quite simply: good teaching is important to me, and we should help each other become better teachers. As such, I strive to develop a culture of good teaching by contributing to all activities and initiatives that support it. This includes initiating new programs and courses which help enrich the university experience, attending social activities and welcoming new members to our teaching community, presenting professional development sessions, volunteering to be on the “bleeding edge” of educational technology pilot projects, and serving on committees that provide university administration with informed opinions on teaching related matters.

My motivation for leading and my style of leadership are nearly perfectly classified by Robert Greenleaf’s “Servant Leadership” model:

“The servant-leader is servant first... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead.” ~ Robert K. Greenleaf, 1970

The characteristics of servant leaders are: Listening, Empathy, Healing, Awareness, Persuasion, Conceptualization, Foresight, Stewardship, Commitment to the Growth of People, and Building Community (“The Understanding and Practice of Servant Leadership”, L.C. Spears, 2005) but this is perhaps better embodied by the following:

“A servant-leader focuses primarily on the growth and well-being of people and the communities to

which they belong. While traditional leadership generally involves the accumulation and exercise of power by one at the “top of the pyramid,” servant leadership is different. The servant-leader shares power, puts the needs of others first and helps people develop and perform as highly as possible.”
~ Robert K. Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership

When working with colleagues on projects and committees, I have often found myself either formally or informally in a leadership role. When formally responsible for leading a group I use my strengths in problem solving and group work from my own discipline (Engineering) to lead project teams. Specifically, I adapt my style such that I use my strengths to provide what a team needs (i.e. if a team needs an organizer then be that, if a team needs someone to look to for leadership and/or strength, then be that). Recently I have found myself leading teams where I am less knowledgeable than others so I have successfully adapted my role to serve to coordinate people with expertise and/or talents to get projects done. Often in these cases, my knowledge of university administrative structures, procedures and policies complements the other team members’ strengths and has led to successful completion of our projects. On a recent project where I led a large group of faculty and selected staff to design a first-year university skills course, I had very little expertise so I adopted a strategy that ensured everyone brought their ideas and concerns to the table. I was then able to merely act as a coach by stepping back and letting a consensus develop and grow, intervening only if an additional nudge was needed. This worked very well on this particular project as the people involved were both highly motivated and knowledgeable.

While reading “The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference” by Malcolm Gladwell I discovered that I am what Gladwell calls a “Maven”. Gladwell’s “Maven” is someone who is an “information specialist” (p.19), who accumulates knowledge and is “almost pathologically helpful”. Gladwell’s idea of a “Maven” explained why I feel the unyielding need to help people solve their problems, especially if it pertains to something I know about, and why I like to hear about how other people have solved their problems; I want to acquire their knowledge and expertise both for my own

use but also so that I may also share it with others. I read the passage several times; I had discovered why I like to help people so much.

It should come as no surprise that I enjoy pushing the boundaries of what I know by researching new and existing teaching strategies to improve my “repertoire”. The more difficult part, however, is finding the resolve to implement them. Having come from a very traditional model of education, this necessitates a significant amount of determination and self-confidence. Having gained many years of teaching experience and some success in implementing new methods and techniques, I am now able to research and adapt them much more readily. If what I learn is not shared with my colleagues, however, then this does nothing to improve my teaching community. I firmly believe that one of the best ways to foster a “teaching culture” and “excellence in teaching” in one’s own community is to be actively involved in teaching-related activities such as discussion groups, workshops, and committees. To achieve this I attempt to lead the spread of “teaching knowledge” by not just saying it is a good idea to share knowledge, but sharing what I know with others, and encouraging others to do the same. Often this necessitates helping people conquer their inhibitions about sharing their “teaching knowledge” by providing them with the confidence and a safe forum in which to do so. I attempt to lead by example in this regard through a variety of forums which range from informally training and mentoring my colleagues to formal professional development presentations. Often my topic is related to my passion for uses of technology in teaching, effective teaching strategies and course design but, regardless of the format, I relish opportunities

Dale's Teaching Tool

In problem-based courses I like to use the extra time and informal setting of tutorials for developing students’ abilities in solving problems and getting to know my students better. To achieve this, students work on an ungraded problem in self-selected groups of three or four to leverage the many advantages that group work can bring; in this case a safe environment for them to experiment in and learn from each other. The tutorial sessions begin with the distribution of one copy of the problem and one large piece of adhesive flip chart paper per group to encourage positive interdependence through limited resources (Frey, et al. 2009). The large flip chart paper is placed on the classroom walls for them to work on so they can all see it, write on it, and visualize the solution. By getting them up on their feet this arrangement increases their engagement with the problem and each other thereby promoting deeper, more active, learning. It also facilitates my ability to quickly assess their work, become involved in the group’s discussion, provide assistance, and ask questions to promote deeper thinking through “what if” scenarios. In addition to these immediate, tangible benefits to the students, I am also able to assess the class’s level of mastery of the subject matter and tailor the subsequent lectures to ensure that gaps in the students’ learning are addressed prior to moving ahead with new topics.

to share my own knowledge with others.

In addition to the sheer enjoyment that I get from discussing teaching with my colleagues, I also use it as an opportunity to provide informal mentoring. When sharing my own stories and lessons learned, I am always conscious of their level of interest and, if they do show an interest in something I do or know then I endeavor to make myself available to them to teach and/or mentor them on the relevant topic. Furthermore, I make every attempt to not put it off until a later date by doing it right there if we can or setting a firm time to address the issue. If a colleague is struggling with something then I attempt to help them by discussing the issue. If they seem open to help then I assist them in developing a solution based on my own experience and knowledge or identify possible resources that may help. Being deeply engaged in the teaching community is critical to achieving the latter. I then follow up to see if they have resolved their problem and assist whenever possible.

In closing, since I have an unyielding desire to help where I can, I must often make conscious decisions about which projects I take on. I have developed the following “Golden Rules” that I use to assist me:

- If it is important to you then help.
- If you cannot do it well then find someone who can.
- If you say you are going to do something then follow through, on time, and to the end.
- Maintain a positive attitude; it’s infectious.
- Enjoy your work and your colleagues, and celebrate your successes and your failures together.

Teaching Philosophy

Dr. Emin Civi

Teaching is a creative and responsive process. If teachers invest their principles, models, and practices with their creative energies, they shape not only their students’ immediate experiences, but also their futures. My approach to teaching has been deeply influenced by my own field of study – marketing, and I have adopted three of its core principles to be ever more effective. First, I need to continually strive to know my students fully so I can create a personal and motivating learning environment. Second, I need to creatively identify learning experiences that are both responsive to ‘who they are’ and that are richly engaging so they acquire the designated learning outcomes in meaningful and enduring ways. And third, I need to get their feedback so I can adapt and adopt new strategies that are ever more effective. This constitutes the scaffold I build every day, from which all these creative potentials grow.

Knowing my students to create a personal and motivating learning environment: Connecting with my students by creating rapport, building trust, and providing a safe learning environment is vital to my success as a teacher and their success as learners. When I know them I can motivate them; I can create engaging learning activities that increase their comprehension and retention; and I can push them toward fulfilling high expectations. A safe learning environment also allows me to challenge them in thought-provoking rather than intimidating ways. Beginning the first day of class and continuing throughout the term, I learn about their backgrounds, interests, and fears, as well as their expectations of me and the class. They also get to know me. I then use this information to tailor their learning activities in ways that match their learning preferences, interests, and abilities.

Providing rich and engaging learning experiences: I use and create a wide variety of activities to engage

my students. I consider them ‘rich’ when they are both meaningful and captivating. My experience confirms the evidence that students gain more enduring knowledge when they are participatory learners, not merely passive recipients. As such, I use a range of learning activities from in class discussion where debate is driven by thought-provoking questions, to analysis of business dailies and contemporary cases, to experiential/service learning where students work with companies to identify and solve real problems. Through the latter, students not only better understand abstract concepts because they have to apply them to a real company, but they also learn how to deal with the real world ramifications of their actions.

Getting and giving feedback: Feedback is vital to students’ success and to my success. They need quick and meaningful feedback so they know where they have done well, where they may need improvement, and what my expectations are. I need their feedback so I can identify or create learning opportunities that help them learn. One way I seek feedback is through mid-semester evaluations. After some thought, I implement strategies that reflect their input, which lets students know that I pay attention to their concerns and care about their progress and learning. It also builds rapport and strengthens our learning partnership.

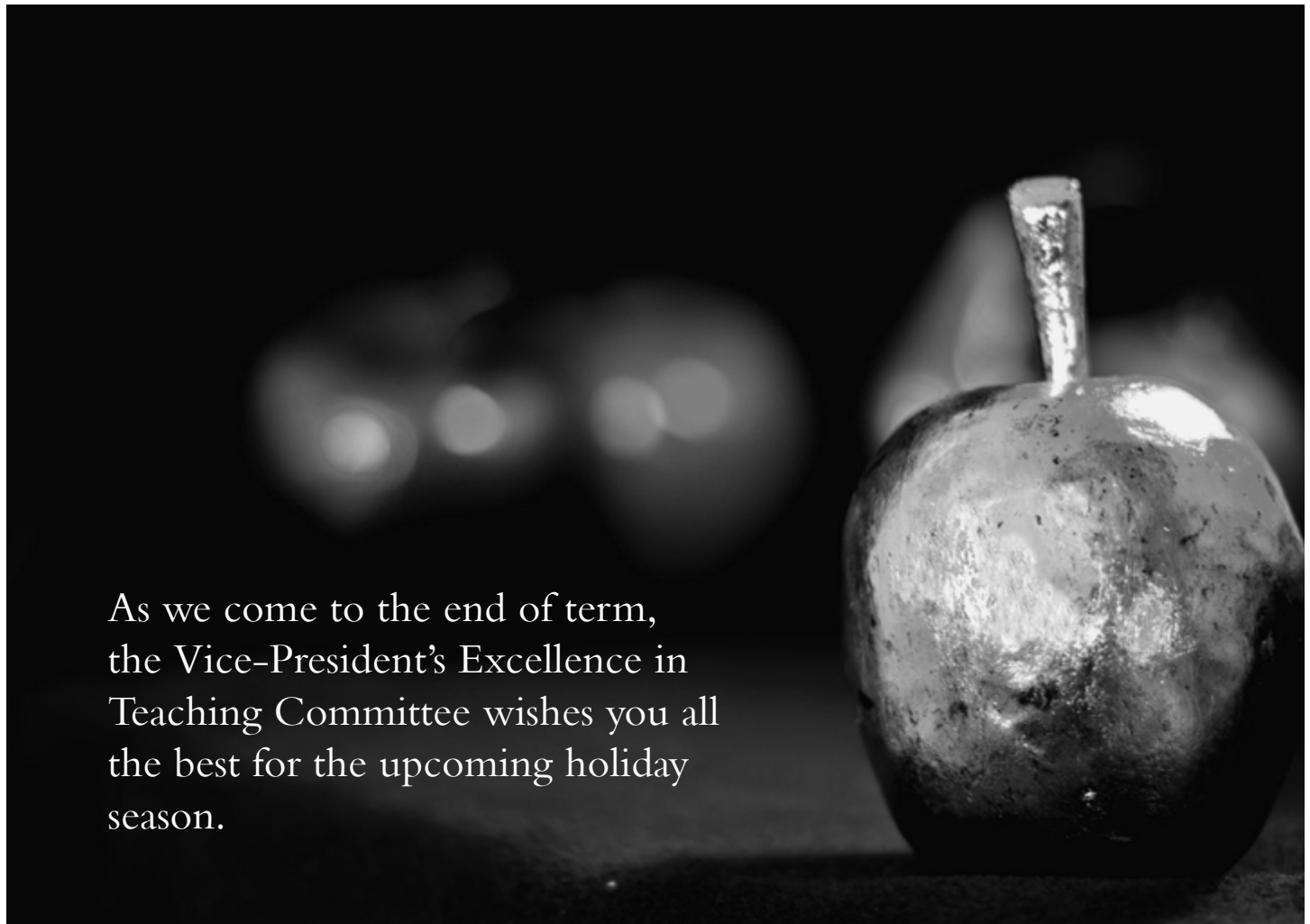
In conclusion, effective teachers continuously experiment and learn. I am ultimately an evolving teacher committed to reshaping my own practice in order to help my students transform themselves. By adapting my teaching strategies to student needs and interest, I create a personal learning environment which nurtures their creative potentials. In my role as professor, I strive to instill something in my students that they can draw on – and build from – long after they leave the university.

Emin's Teaching Tool

In-Class Exercises : I invest a lot of time and energy studying student interests and the constraints that limit their learning, and then I identify examples, create exercises, and build cases that align with their interests or overcome constraints. The following is a learning activity that has resulted from getting to know my students.

Using Games to Stimulate Class Preparation

In one of my classes, I noticed that students were not willing to prepare in advance for class, so I adopted the “Jeopardy Game” as a teaching tool. Every week, I created questions from the assigned book chapter, presented them in a “Jeopardy Game” format, and then had teams of students compete against each other. Between questions, I explained concepts or reinforced the subject matter. Novelty, a teamwork approach to learning, and competition through a fun game enticed students to be prepared for and engage in the class.



As we come to the end of term,
the Vice-President's Excellence in
Teaching Committee wishes you all
the best for the upcoming holiday
season.