



# TEACHING MATTERS

newsletter

UNB Saint John

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OUR OWN NATIONAL TREASURE

**Kate Frego named  
3M Teaching Fellow**

See Page 8 For details

Editors: David Creelman & Sandra Bell

Designer: Mary Astorino

## " DIVERSITY THROUGH DIFFERENT LENSES "

BY DAVID CREELMAN & SANDRA BELL

So often at UNBSJ when we discuss the issue of diversity in our classrooms we think, quite sensibly, of our local and international communities. After all, we can now take pride that we have one of the most pluralist student bodies in Canada. However, diversity can mean numerous things, and in this edition of *Teaching Matters* we explore the different ways in which our campus promotes and benefits from a variety of experiences. From the unique perspectives of our mature students, to the richness of our library resources, to the benefits offered through our exchange student programs, this edition makes apparent some of the unique ways in which UNBSJ serves and promotes a range of different perspectives.

In this edition we also want to note a change on the masthead of *Teaching Matters*. Recently the challenge of editing *Teaching Matters* was passed to Sandra Bell and David Creelman, both of the Department of Humanities and Languages. We want to recognize the accomplishments of the previous editor Ken Craft. Since the fall of 2003, Ken served at the heart of this publication and he worked tirelessly to give UNBSJ a distinct voice regarding teaching issues. Ken turned out at least two editions each year including several special editions devoted to the needs of new faculty, the innovations offered by the campus's Stuart Award winners, and a special edition devoted to the work of Neil Scott. He worked long and faithfully to keep this publication thriving, and we appreciate his efforts to ensure that UNBSJ had a venue through which it could express its own perspectives on teaching and learning. Please join us in congratulating Ken on his successful tenure. You can access the past issues he shaped so carefully through the VPETC website:

<http://www.unbsj.ca/vpetc/publications.html>

### CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS: " TEACHING IN THE MIDST OF THE PSE "

The editors of *Teaching Matters* need your voice. We want to create an archive of what it was like to teach during the fall of 2007, a term unique not just for UNB, but for universities across Canada. Never have professors had to teach their courses while simultaneously dealing with the anxiety that their university might be closed. So how did the PSE protest and the struggle to save UNBSJ affect your work in the classroom? Were you more of an activist than normal, and did this strengthen or weaken your sense of engagement with your course material? Were your students more or less focused on their work? Did you have to adjust your courses to address the needs of activist students? How did you teach through this political period?

Don't let your experience remain unexpressed. We want to gather together all the different voices of the campus and publish a special edition of *Teaching Matters* which will stand as a record and an archive of our experience teaching in troubled times. We will accept submissions from 200 to 2000 words; send them to editors Sandra Bell ([sbell@unbsj.ca](mailto:sbell@unbsj.ca)) or David Creelman ([creelman@unbsj.ca](mailto:creelman@unbsj.ca)) by March 10th (the end of the Study Break).

## UNITY IN DIVERSITY: TEACHING COLLECTIONS IN AN AGE OF INFORMATION OVERLOAD

BY JANET FRASER - INFORMATION ACCESS LIBRARIAN

Three decades past I was an undergraduate university student who regarded libraries and their collections as a mixed blessing. Wonderful books of literature and criticism to browse once I had tracked down my general areas of interest (PR-PS), great current literary periodicals easily found because the grouping was filed by Title A to Z, and comfy chairs and beautiful views in the plentiful smoking lounges! Not a good place to ask staff for research help (where were staff, anyway? And besides, even if I found some one, would that person deride my ignorance of research methods?). Discovering in the library new fiction and poetry that expanded my personal interests contributed to my becoming a lifelong learner, reader and writer in the field of English Literature. However, the library's literature to which I gravitated had nothing to do with my undergraduate essay and exam work. Good thing our Literature professors emphasized textual criticism and original thought, because research was a mysterious subject for me and most of my fellow English majors.

In the same era I took an Art History course from a professor who peppered his lectures and slide shows with anecdotes about his work acquiring what turned out to be one of the most magnificent Canadian Art collections in the world. Here was a man who had the monumental task of taking eighteen-year-old students through the highlights of Art and Architecture from the hieroglyphics of ancient civilizations to the graffiti art of our early postmodern civilizations of the 1970's. And how was he to make this highly varied and voluminous information stick in our minds? Well, Professor Hart had a mantra which he repeated to us as we looked at and analyzed thousands of diverse works: "Unity in multiplicity." His clear, succinct explanations of the unifying principles of Art and Architecture helped guide us through a course that could have been bewildering. As a side example he illustrated how his eclectic Canadian art collection (Native, Group of Seven, abstract expressionist, conceptual and pop art) all fit together. Anything that's worth doing, worth collecting, worth studying, century in, century out, has been created according to unifying principles of order, meaning and beauty.

Creation. Sounds God-like, doesn't it? Perhaps that accounts for academic library fears many students feel to this day. The academic library when I was an undergraduate

seemed like a cathedral: huge, high-ceilinged, darkish, hushed, multi-faceted, manned by whispering people uniformly attired in glasses and plain, dark clothes. OK, I'm exaggerating, although I do believe many students saw the library that way. The truth is librarians and library assistants have always taken a clear, focused, energetic and unifying approach to organizing and making meaningful academic library collections: they keep abreast of the latest trends in information science and library resources, improve collections access and use through continuous changes to technical and public services, expand collections, design new buildings, commit to all forms of automation, and create specialized collections and research facilities. And as long as there has been diversity in university programmes, there has been diversity in library collections of resources to fully support research and study in these programmes.

Fast forward: Ward Chipman Library, December 7, 2007. I am writing this article on a computer that makes writing a joy. So different from the day in 1976 that I threw my typewriter out of the window after making the tenth messy typo on the page! Yes, I do not feel prejudiced in proclaiming that the decades of continuous work by academic library staff at Ward Chipman in conjunction with their library colleagues at UNB in Fredericton have resulted in a gloriously unified organization of a diverse multitude of academic collections. Through a wide variety of in-house electronic and print and audio-visual resources as well as access to external academic libraries throughout the world, Ward Chipman Library offers a wealth of research opportunities for the university community. The library itself is a warm, well-lit attractive space that clearly offers its diverse services through signage and welcoming staff at the hub of the space, as clients enter and exit. There are new support services of instructional technology, information technology, and writing consultancies. There are library guides and helpful Subject Guides to get students started on their collections research, a library Website that covers all of our resources and services in an easy-use format, phone-in and in-house research service, and a variety of circulation services. All of these things constitute forms of teaching, ways to unify the diversity of what the library offers. But what can be done to provide a fully engaged and engaging experience of collections, teaching to students focused on a particular discipline and confronted with what may seem like too much of a good thing, library information that's just too overwhelming?

Other than all of us professors and library staff telling students to take a deep breath and one step at a time, there is another option that librarians have been pursuing with vigour. Linda Hansen, Diane Buhay, David Ross and I are the four librarians at Ward Chipman Library who are available throughout the term to teach library services to students in the classroom. The librarians work in concert with faculty to provide help in accessing the diverse resources within the discipline. If the professor has time only for a short introduction, the librarian happily comes into the classroom to distribute guides and provide some basic information. Many times faculty is able to provide one or more full class sessions within the term. We librarians can prepare specific research guidance geared to upcoming essays and presentations. In a smart classroom, we can guide students in finding appropriate print and electronic reference and general-use books, print and electronic articles, and related audio-visual materials. We can also teach students how to evaluate the material they find, prepare bibliographic information, and go further afield in their research through document delivery.

When I teach I keep in mind the things I enjoyed most when I fell in love with English Literature at the undergraduate and graduate levels. I tell short anecdotes related to the course. I started out my class related to *The Romantic Novel* with a story about buying *Wuthering Heights* from Scholastic Book Service for 95 cents, a fortune in those days, but so worth it! I was 11 years old and wondered if anyone else had read and loved the book the way I did! I talk about discovering the library records and tapes of authors reading that allowed me to make better sense of 'difficult' modern poetry. When I heard Margaret Atwood read *The Journals of Susannah Moodie*, the urgent postcolonial nature of the work became evident to me. Or I find the latest in Jane Austen literary articles, which write about Austen fans having changed from being Janeites to Janeaholics! Then I move on to simple subject searches of our online catalogue *Quest*, and further develop the theme of subject searching as we look at electronic reference materials, ebook selections, and relevant critical journal articles. My goal is concentrated on one small area of one diverse discipline, and I believe that it is with micro-examples, elaborated upon simply and clearly, free of library jargon, and keeping in mind the excitement of the particular discipline, that unity in multiplicity is best achieved, and research information can start to grip the student's mind and stay stuck. Of course one session is only one attempt, but if enough of us librarians enter enough classrooms, the cross-over can

only enrich and deepen the student's understanding. Also, the attempt is made by all of us librarians to be an external source of welcome to the library. What the student doesn't remember from the in-class session or wants to learn more about can be addressed by a call or visit to the library.

One more thought about unity in diversity and literary collections: historically it has been faculty who have developed our library's collections. While deselection is a vital part of keeping the collections timely and relevant, the library retains much classic literature that adds distinction to its collections. *Diversity*, according to the Oxford English Dictionary (available online), can also mean distinctiveness, or distinction. I am grateful to a past professor who provided Ward Chipman with a superlative collection of books by and about Evelyn Waugh, as well as books by a great cult writer of the same period, Henry Green. We also have, according to Cambridge editor Farrah Mendellsohn, one of the "three or four best Science Fiction and Fantasy collections in North America" (much of this collection was developed by Ward Chipman librarian Dennis Ablitt). And American faculty and librarians contributed to building a small but exclusive collection of Beat literature by writers such as Jack Kerouac, who is still wildly popular with students and general readers alike. Added to this we have access to tens of thousands of scholarly literary articles, mainly through vast databases like Literature Online (LION) and Modern Languages Association (MLA). And don't forget the video clips of great poets like Sharon Olds, available through LION.

**By Janet Fraser**  
**Information Access Librarian**



## BENEFITING FROM THE EXCHANGE

DAVID CREELMAN - HUMANITIES AND LANGUAGES

Each year more than a dozen exchange students come from around the world to study at UNBSJ. These students come for a single term, sometimes for two, and they bring into our classrooms opportunities to add an international component to our courses. The exchange students are often from the European Universities with whom we have agreements, most notably universities in Germany and Denmark, though other regions of the globe are also represented, including Hong Kong, Korea, and Singapore (Kek). Of course, in our more modest moments we may wonder why anyone from a large international university would choose to come to UNBSJ, but their reasons for studying with us are sound. Exchange students come to UNBSJ to study in an English environment and polish their language skills; they travel here to take advantage of some of our particular academic areas of strength -- most often coming to study business or the arts; they come to enjoy a small university setting; and finally they choose us because our quiet little Maritime city happens to be comparatively close to other North American points of interest such as New York, Boston, Washington, Toronto, Montreal, and Quebec City (Kek). From varied backgrounds and bringing diverse interests, these exchange students are ideal individuals to have in our courses, and they are a terrific resource which we can tap in order to enrich our classroom experience.

Exchange students are, in many ways, like other international students who join our classrooms. When international students study at UNBSJ, they often seek to fit into the standard classroom setting and hope to have as full a North American educational experience as possible. Yet integration can be difficult and international students sometimes find it hard to assimilate into their new setting. Professors are certainly able to help with this process. As Iola Peed-Neal, editor of *Teaching for Inclusion* notes, “again and again in the interviews, international students said that if ... the teacher and the other students ... come to them with questions and show that they are curious to learn more about what the student's home country is like, then the international students ... feel more included” (<http://ctl.unc.edu/tfi8.html>). Compared to other international students, exchange students are in a slightly different situation. Visiting students know they are in Saint John for a short period of time and often come alone. They are seeking to absorb as much as they can about a new culture, while simultaneously acting as ambassadors for their own university and nation. By the process of selection these students are usually confident, high achieving, well-prepared, and out-

wardly oriented individuals who want to make as much of their time in Canada as possible. The courses they take at UNBSJ will usually be transferred back to their final transcripts on a pass/fail basis, and thus they may also be willing to take a few risks knowing that if an assignment or two does not work out, the final outcome will likely be positive. For all these reasons it is comparatively easy and safe to engage them in the classroom, though of course a few basic principles are worth observing.

From the outset, the exchange students should be given a chance to communicate their own comfort levels regarding their participation in the class. Before the term begins you can check your class list for exchange students, listed by degree as UGEX. Clicking the students' name will give you some information about their home address and nation of origin. Early in the term, it is important to meet with the students, if only informally, to determine what you can do to help them integrate into and communicate with the larger class. Many exchange students are willing and indeed eager to be introduced to the larger class as a visiting student. This may sound a bit awkward, but frankly, exchange students do not always find ready access into long established circles of friends. It's not that our local students are not welcoming, but few have had a lot of contact with international cultures, and this sense of reserve sometimes makes it difficult for exchange students to break the ice and develop relationships. Explicitly recognizing this dynamic can make it easier for the exchange students to settle in. As Peed-Neal notes, “Often it was simply that the other students did not know how to go about starting to ask questions. When the teacher encouraged the international student to speak about topics in his or her own experience, and incorporated the new experience into the classroom, the... [other] students reacted with enthusiasm and curiosity” (<http://ctl.unc.edu/tfi8.html>). Once the students are aware that someone in the class has a set of experiences different from their own, it is a relatively easy matter to draw on their experience in order to enrich the larger group; indeed, the insights we can gain from exchange students are varied and helpful.

Exchange students offer an immediately available alternate lens through which our students can understand and appreciate their own learning process. For example, even from the outset it can be worth noting that ways in

which Canadian professors organize their classes are very different from university experiences elsewhere. Are students grumbling on the first day when they discover they have to write three papers? Invite your student from Denmark to describe an evaluation system in which the entire mark for the course rests on a single paper written weeks after classes end. Most of our students are not thrilled to learn that they will have to write a final exam at the end of term, but they may have even greater sympathy for their colleague from Cologne, once they discover that German students must write a set of exams covering the entire content of their undergraduate degrees. From the outset students may gain a better understanding of their own educational experience when they compare it to the strengths and weaknesses of a different system. (And be sure to ask about tuition rates. Learning that many countries not only offer free tuition, but financial support for full-time students can be very enlightening for our local scholars.)

Exchange students not only deepen our local students' awareness of our pedagogical processes, but enrich our classes in multiple other ways. In most courses, professors attempt to connect the material at hand with the lived experience of the students through the use of examples and comparisons. In the discipline of English, we are constantly trying to locate the texts we study within their historical and cultural contexts. Exchange students allow us to establish these contexts while including a different slant which enriches the experience of local students in the room. For example, two years ago, while exploring a modernist Canadian novel set during the First World War, the class diverted briefly into a very interesting discussion between my English Canadian, Polish, and German students regarding the way particular battles and war time experiences have shaped national memory and their broader sense of identity. Because the study of the novel corresponded with Remembrance Day, the students were very interested to learn that in Germany there are no public days of remembrance; indeed, the official nature of our commemorations seemed very odd to the two students from Cologne. They went on to discuss the sense of anxiety and collective guilt their education system cultivates, which contrasts sharply with the local Canadian's sense of their military past. Our discussions only lasted ten minutes as we compared different national experiences, but two years later, students in that class still recall this conversation as one of the most interesting of the course. Such moments may not arise frequently, but if we remain open to the possibility of tapping into someone else's experience, our courses as a whole can be enriched.

Of course, in every situation professors will find a different way to integrate the experiences of the exchange students

into their course material. But these days, when only a small percentage of our local students are taking advantage of our wonderful student abroad programs, any such opportunities to internationalize our courses will deepen the experiences of our students. In a small university like our own we need to take advantage of every opportunity to remind our students that there are other interesting worlds at their doorstep; complex and engaging places are just waiting to be explored.

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Peed-Neal, Iola. Ed. "Chapter 8: International Students." *Teaching for Inclusion*. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill UNC-CH Center for Teaching and Learning, 1997. 24 Jan. 2008. <<http://ctl.unc.edu/tfi8.html>>.

**By David Creelman**  
**Humanities and Languages**



## CHALLENGES AND BENEFITS FACING SEVEN "MATURE" STUDENTS AT UNBSJ

BY ANNE RYAN - HUMANITIES AND LANGUAGES

### The Mature Student

What is university life like for mature students, the people who arrive at UNBSJ not just out of high school, but as older individuals who have deferred a university education into their adulthood? Statistically we know that 41% of all students who entered programs in the 2005 fall enrollment were over the age of twenty-one. These students, who form such a large part of our population, come into the classroom from a wide variety of backgrounds and arrive with a unique set of concerns. The university does not collect all the information that may give clues about the diverse life experience of our mature students; however, insight into the lives of mature students can be gained through interviews and conversations. In order to more fully understand what life is like for older students, a series of interviews was conducted with seven mature domestic students. These interviews did not produce a scientifically representative sampling of adult learners at the university; however, they did allow a diverse population to give a voice to their experience, their challenges and their accomplishments.

Five women and two men answered by email the following two questions:

- 1) What has been the greatest challenge in pursuing an undergraduate degree as a mature student?
- 2) What has been the greatest benefit that being a mature student presents to your undergraduate studies?

Their responses addressed not only these issues but a variety of other concerns, and as we hear their voices we can appreciate how diverse and interesting a group they are.

### External Challenges

Mature students come to UNBSJ for a wide variety of reasons. Often, they decide to enroll as a response to significant life changes, and as they begin university very practical external challenges must be met. Of the seven interviewees, three students explained that they came to university when they were faced with the task of supporting themselves and their family as single parents. One student returned to her university education as a result of the death of her spouse: "I decided to finish my undergraduate studies after my husband died of cancer. I was a widow with a very small income to live on and a 16-year-old daughter at

home." Another single parent cited financial considerations as being one of her greatest challenges after her husband left the family without providing an income for them: "I did not receive any child support. I have been living below the poverty line for three years, and there have been times when I have had to rely on the food bank, and ask neighbours I hardly knew for help. I took any job I could get." A third single parent envisioned a return to her university education as a road to a better life: "I was a single mom of two on assistance and I was bound and determined that my children were going to have a chance to 'make it out.'" For these students, the challenges they face as they get an education are tied to the larger challenges they face as they deal with the difficulties that life presents to them.

Life as a mature student also brings immediate financial challenges: "Most of us work a full time job while maintaining a home and running a family." Mature students who work in an attempt to provide for their families as well as pay for their education, find themselves within a constricted environment. One student discussed the Catch-22 situation presented to those who attempt to finance their living expenses while saving for their education, and in doing so, inadvertently decrease their eligibility for funding: "Initially I enrolled in a full course load pending student loans [...] but when applying for loans they require income [to be reported] for the last 17 weeks. [...] I made more than the average student summer job so I didn't get a big loan. Seems like everything is made to keep you out of school instead of helping you get in it." While supportive student-student and faculty-student relationships are vital to a successful tenure at university, without financial support, some mature students are at risk of deferring their education even longer or forever.

Other external challenges can arise particularly for mature students with young families. Female students over the age of 21 comprise the majority of our student population (53%), and a high percentage of female learners over the age of 21 seek out part-time study (8.9% of the whole population or 61% of the part-time population). In contrast, only a few women under 21 choose to enter programs on a part-time basis (0.4% of the whole or 2.8% of part-time students). Would these older female students attend university on a full-time basis if there were daycare facilities or arrangements for education through their

work? How many male and female part-time students over (and under) 21 would be full-time students if money was not an issue? The diversity of our student body makes it difficult to know for sure, but improved access to day-care or financial aid would doubtless improve the experience of many mature students.

### Inner Challenges

While mature students must address various external challenges, they also frequently face inner anxieties as well: "My greatest challenge in being a mature student is the plague of self-doubt I felt at returning to school at the age of thirty to complete a BA. Is it worth it? Should I just try to get a minimal amount of training in something and find a job with benefits? I need to start an RRSP, dammit." Another student doubted her abilities to perform at all: "The greatest challenge was walking into the first class for the first time. At close to forty when I decided to return I was obviously older than my peers. Standing outside the classroom with young people the same age as my children was quite daunting and I seriously doubted my ability to do this."

While self-doubt complicated the experience of some students, pride can also pose a challenge. Anxiety about age can become an obstacle, at least initially, for some mature students. One student initially dismissed a university education because she "felt too old." Another found it challenging "to settle into a learning environment centered around teaching students assumed to be fresh out of high school." While one student found it "depressing" and "an assault on pride" to be learning in History class events that she has witnessed on the nightly news in her earlier life, another cited "pride" as a barrier to sharing her personal challenges in returning to university with others: "Because of my pride, very few people know about my hardships."

Getting to the door of the classroom is daunting, but once the mature students begin to confront and overcome the various external and internal challenges they face, a sense of confidence inevitably follows: "Once I enrolled in my first course, I realized there were students more 'mature' than myself. I did well in that course (A+)!" This confidence surfaces after a period of re-learning how to be students again: "Finding enough time to do readings, research, write essays, and study for tests and exams was hard at times, but once I saw I could do it, things got better"; "Once I had got a few papers under my belt and realized that I was perfectly capable of doing the work I did settle down into the swing of things"; "It has been hard to change lifestyles from working and making money, not thinking a whole lot, to having your brain working at its

max pretty much all the times of the day." Clearly, an adjustment period must be anticipated when pursuing studies as a mature student.

A supportive environment can also be instrumental to the success of a mature student. While some friends, relatives and co-workers remain perplexed about the mature student's decision to pursue their education, others are open in their support: "I receive a lot of praise from people for pursuing my dream." Often this support comes from within the classroom: "I must also add that in many of my classes it has been a blessing to be welcomed by many of my younger peers. I have taken classes with friends of my children and other young people that I have subsequently made friends with. Their encouragement is very much needed at times [...] and it has been an enjoyable experience."

### Reaping the Benefits

Whatever their background or challenging circumstances mature student are convinced that the benefits of their education compensate for the difficulties. Many related that their own life experiences helped them perform as students: "I love that at this age, I have a sense of confidence in who I am and what I know. I brought my experiences from the real world into the classroom in a way that the youngsters just can't"; "I'd have to say that I think when I speak to profs, present something, or raise a concern, I'm taken more seriously because I've been out in the real world"; "The greatest benefit of completing my undergraduate degree as a mature student is that I am able to bring life experiences into my studies"; "The greatest benefit of being a mature student is maturity itself."

Rather than accepting their life experience as the last word, however, most mature students see this experience as a stepping stone to more learning. One mature student suggested the ways in which life experience may influence the quality of learning: "As a mature student I bring plenty of life experience into the classroom and I think it helps me be a more open-minded person. I think age gives me the freedom to be honest with myself and everyone else." Others credit maturity itself for their own focused approach to learning: "Maturity contributes to my ability to stay focused and the desire to do well--and understanding the importance of both"; "I am more focused on a goal and have a clear path of where I want to be going with all of this education." Maturity may contribute to an ability to focus on the formation goals and it may broaden what constitutes relevance in forming those learning goals.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7...

## CHALLENGES AND BENEFITS FACING SEVEN “MATURE” STUDENTS AT UNBSJ BY ANN RYAN

While some respondents cited time management as a challenge, one student argued that her own expertise in time management, skills learned earlier in the workplace and at home, ensured her success as a student: “I have never had a problem juggling six courses per semester, work, kids, husband, home etc. As a mature student, you usually bring these skills with you.” Maturity and experience can benefit others in the university community, because mature students see themselves as part of an interdependent learning team. They are often highly invested in their educational success and will actively take measures to increase the degree of that success.

Ultimately, the students acknowledged the benefits that their university education offered to themselves and their families: “I am proud of my accomplishments. I feel good about myself. I am setting a good example for my daughter”; “After the birth of my children I wanted to give them so much more, and I wanted them to be proud of me, so I went back to UNBSJ to pursue my career”; “I think university has empowered me to believe in myself and offer hope for a better future, and it has also helped me find inner strength, which in turn, has enabled me to walk with my head high.[...] This has also helped me to become a better parent”; “I wanted a career I loved not a ‘job’ I survived in. This is what I wanted to pass on to my children.”

### Supporting Mature Students

This study briefly articulates common challenges and benefits faced by a small sampling of UNBSJ’s mature domestic student population. The challenges facing these students illustrate the degree to which mature students are emotionally, intellectually, and financially invested in achieving their educational goals. Because they invest deeply in their university education, mature students are engaged and active learners who use a variety of strategies to achieve their success. While the challenges that face mature students are many, faculty, staff and fellow students can offer support through their understanding of some of these challenges. Administrators who remain vigilant in securing funding for mature students will continue to enable them to reach their educational goals. In addition, conducting research about our mature student population in more depth may offer better understanding of why the university continues to be a dynamic and attractive institution for learning.

By Anne Ryan



The Fellowship was established in 1986 through the generosity of 3M Canada and STLHE, allowing recognition of 228 Canadian professors from 43 different universities. From 35,000 eligible faculty, 52 nominations were adjudicated this year and 10 fellowships awarded. Now in its 23rd year, the 3M Fellowship is the most prestigious recognition of excellence and leadership in Canadian university teaching.



**Katherine Frego, Department of Biology, University of New Brunswick SJ,** is “a gardener, not a farmer.”

Students call her “the heart and soul of teaching and learning at UNB Saint John.”

*Congratulations  
Kate!!*



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## FURTHER RESOURCES ON THE ISSUE OF DIVERSITY

COMPILED BY SANDRA BELL  
HUMANITIES AND LANGUAGES

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### **“Diversity in the Classroom”**

Fisher College of Business, Ohio State University

<http://fisher.osu.edu/offices/diversity/diversity-resources/diversity-in-classroom>

This site provides a host of tips on teaching to a diverse, multi-cultural classroom.

### **“Teaching for Inclusion: Diversity in the Classroom”**

From the Teaching and Learning Centre at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

<http://ctl.unc.edu/tfitoc.html>

A lengthy, detailed study of numerous topics related to diversity, including gender, ethnicity, special religious needs, learning disabilities, non-traditional students, etc. Each chapter outlines the discussion, provides suggestions for the classroom, and presents a number of student comments on the subject.

### **“Six Ways to Discourage Learning”**

By Douglas Duncan of the American Astronomical Society Education Office and Amy Singel Southon of the Chicago Botanic Gardens

<http://www.aas.org/education/publications/sixways.html>

An informative and sometimes humorous look at how educators often impede learning in the classroom, with tips on how to encourage learning instead.

### **“Creating Inclusive College Classrooms”**

Shari Saunders and Diana Kardia

Centre for Research on Learning and Teaching, University of Michigan

[http://www.crlt.umich.edu/crlttext/P3\\_1text.html](http://www.crlt.umich.edu/crlttext/P3_1text.html)

This paper encourages inclusiveness by having the instructor think about course content and class planning, and reflect on his or her own assumptions and awareness of multicultural issues; it also includes a number of strategies to apply in the classroom.

### **“From the Students’ View”**

Derek Bruff

Centre for Teaching, Vanderbilt University

[http://www.vanderbilt.edu/cft/resources/cft\\_newsletters/spring2003/student\\_view\\_difference.htm](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/cft/resources/cft_newsletters/spring2003/student_view_difference.htm)

A summary of student views on instructors who were in some way different from the majority of students in the classroom, and examples of how the instructors attempted to bridge those gaps.

## "THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD TEACHING – GOOD EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP – GOOD UNIVERSITY EDUCATION"

BY KATE FREGO - BIOLOGY

**Editors' Note:** *In the Fall of 2007, Dr Kate Frego received the Association of Atlantic University's "Award for Educational Leadership." Dr Frego is the only individual in the Atlantic region to have won both of the AAU's most prestigious awards, having already won the "Distinguished Teachers Award" in 2002. At the award's ceremony Dr Frego delivered the following address, which Teaching Matters is pleased to reprint in full.*

I recently cleaned out some musty old boxes in the basement – they had traveled with me almost 30 years, through 14 moves, and had not been unpacked, so you KNOW they had to be of vital importance!

But in them I found notebooks from my elementary school education. What a "blast from the past"! Not ALL my notebooks, but (funnily enough) only the ones from Composition classes – in those days, called "paragraphs". I leafed through them with fresh eyes, noticing the development of my what-was-then-called "penmanship" and read with great amusement my literary compositions: *How to milk a cow*, which began "first find a friendly cow..." and the ubiquitous *What I want to be when I grow up*, which was in those days a florist. Obsessed with the sex organs of plants even at the age of 8!

Then I came across Grade 4 – my careful Grade 3 script was a scribble, my compositions were testy at best, and as I read them, I was engulfed with the emotions I felt as I wrote them. I vividly relived a sense of humiliation, of anger at what I perceived as unfair treatment at the hands of the omnipotent and uncaring Teacher. (Aptly enough, her name was "Mrs. Hirt"!)

Abruptly, in my Grade 5 notebooks my careful script was back, and my compositions sparkled with excitement, humour, and the biggest words I could spell. One composition leapt out at me:

### *My fifth year in school*

*This year has been, I consider, my most enjoyable year of school. The really important part of it is our teacher, who demonstrates constructive criticism. I have never been as encouraged and criticized as much. Of course, I don't agree with everything she says and does. But on the whole, I've learned more in this one year than in the other ten of my life. All except one of the teachers have been fair and thoughtful, never placing the students in embarrassing or demoralizing situations.*

The focus on how I felt, and its impact on what I learned, went right to the foundations of my university teaching. I wondered if this focus was because I was young and vulnerable – surely adult learners are capable of putting aside their emotions and engaging intellectually, whatever the qualities of the teacher! So I sent out an inquiry to students: my current undergraduate classes, and the graduate students in our Biology program: *What do you see as the importance of good teaching?*

Most of the replies began by trying to define good teaching, from which I took two points: (1) there is a wide range of opinion on this issue, and (2) students often forget to read the assignment! However three other themes emerged.

The overwhelming theme in the undergraduates' replies was how GOOD teaching impacted *learning*, how it made learning "easier" or "a pleasure" – but not less work. The undergraduates told me that good teaching made them work harder, and want to learn more.

The graduates told me how good teachers had shaped their educational careers, even shaped their lives with what was often called "life lessons". They told me how a good teacher opened a whole new world of possibilities, and how they were now in graduate school, in a particular discipline that they had never considered before, because good teaching opened that door for them. (This resonates with me: I was going to be a florist in Grade 5, a physicist in first year university, and then I met MY mentor and the world of botany just grew on me!!)

But a third theme emerged from both age groups: the students explicitly equated good teaching with personal interaction with the teacher, as a conduit to interaction with the content and the discipline. They described what Theodore Sizer (Former Dean, Harvard University College of Education) called the "minutiae" of teaching: the little things that we do that communicate how much we care.

- *About the students* – about their dignity, how they learn, how they are growing;
- *About the discipline* – and why students should care about it;
- *About scholarship as a way of life* – about rational habits of mind, the deep commitment to intellectual values and learning, and most importantly, a sense of the joy of inquiry.

They also noted what chemist Robert Wolk described: the effects of bad teaching are lasting negative impacts, often killing any interest in the subject for years to come.

*So why is good teaching important?* Because good teaching transforms.

It transforms the *student* by engaging him/her in a learning process, a relationship first with the teacher, then the content, then the discipline, then the world. Henry Adams said, "A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence will end."

But good teaching also transforms the *teacher*. Teaching is rewarding, but it can also be difficult, risky, even painful. It requires a person's best on a daily basis: integrity, wisdom, and love. "To learn and never be filled, is wisdom; to teach and never be weary, is love."

I would argue that all I have said about good teaching applies to good leadership. Early in my career at UNB Saint John, I found myself at a teaching retreat where I happened to be at a table with the late Dr. Neil Scott. I recall his warmth, his caring, and his gentle way of providing feedback on a syllabus I was developing – he made me feel as if we were peers helping each other. (It was only later that I realized the depth of his expertise: at that time, he constituted the entirety of our Education Dept.!) The guidance that I received from him during that retreat, and throughout the years of our collegial interactions, has shaped my teaching, and in fact provided the model for educational leadership that has shaped my work at UNB and beyond.

Neil was a good leader, not because he told people what to do, or shepherded us – rather because he did what he believed was the right thing to do, and when we saw what he was doing, we wanted to go there too. His contributions to our lives at UNBSJ were the inspiration for our new *Neil Scott Award for Educational Leadership*.

That takes me to one last point. This occasion is truly bittersweet – here I am, accepting this award that celebrates our progress in enhancing and recognizing the scholarship of teaching and learning at UNB Saint John, while our provincial government is thinking through its plans to dismantle it.

After a prolonged battle to build a campus in Saint John (that was before my time!), and the long road to having teaching support there – finally reaching fruition this year with the approval of a Teaching and Learning Centre – and development of a new Peer Mentoring program, based on a model developed by our dear Neil Scott – everything is frozen while we wait to find out if we will exist next year.

In the near future, southern New Brunswick may be undertaking an experiment to see the importance of a good university education, by experiencing what happens in its absence.

My students told me, "The importance of good teaching? That's obvious!" But whether we define it at the level of classroom teaching, of leading other teaching professionals, or shaping the education system for a province, the importance is simple; good teaching transforms us all (teachers and learners) by guiding us to a new place: the top of a higher hill, from which we have a new, broader vision of the future with more opportunities, more desire, to climb higher.

**By Kate Frego  
Biology**





**DEPARTMENTAL AWARDS FOR  
TEACHING EXCELLENCE**

**(DATE)**

**RECIPIENTS FOR 2007-2008**

**FACULTY OF ARTS**

**HISTORY AND POLITICS..... CHERYL FURY  
HUMANITIES & LANGUAGES .... ANNE COMPTON  
SOCIAL SCIENCE ..... BETH KEYES  
PSYCHOLOGY..... MARY ANN CAMPBELL**

**FACULTY OF SASE**

**BIOLOGY ..... KATE FREGO  
COMPUTER SCIENCE &  
APPLIED STATISTICS ..... HAZEL WEBB  
ENGINEERING ..... JAMES CHRISTIE  
MATHEMATICS ..... MERZIK KAMEL  
NURSING..... JILL NORTHRUP**

**SAINT JOHN COLLEGE**

**SJC..... IAN LEE**

**UPCOMING CONFERENCE TO NOTE!**

**THE 32ND MCGRAW-HILL RYERSON  
TEACHING, LEARNING & TECHNOLOGY CONFERENCE**

**CARLETON UNIVERSITY BETWEEN FEBRUARY 20 TO 22**

**CONFERENCE THEME: "FIRST YEAR IN FOCUS: THINKING THROUGH  
FIRST YEAR STUDENT SUCCESS."**

Four faculty members from UNBSJ have co-authored a paper entitled "You Get What You Need: The Benefits and Limitations of Experiential Learning in First Year Classes." The paper, to be presented at the conference on the 22nd, examines the limitations and benefits of moving from a "content" to a "skills-based" approach in first-year classrooms. The UNBSJ session will review a number of experiential approaches to learning in both Arts and Science classrooms. Case studies will explore the recent reorganization of lower-level Biology courses to focus on the mastery of specific abilities, and the restructuring of lower level English courses to incorporate active learning strategies, including peer-review editing of writing assignments. Focusing on abilities and skills in the first year can be demanding for professors who must invest more time than usual in course preparation, skills development, and marking, with the result that one covers less of the traditional first year material. Benefits of a first year experiential learning model include more fully engaged and better prepared students in the upper level courses. Faculty members who are interested in the McGraw-Hill Ryerson Conference can find out more information at:

<http://www.mcgrawhill.ca/events/>

**Teaching Matters @UNBSJ wants to know about any teaching conferences or projects you are attending, developing, or presenting. Please contact the editors to help spread the word about your work or scholarship as a teacher.**