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## FSTC News

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*Governors State University*

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# Governors State University

## FSTC News

A Newsletter from the Faculty Scholarship and Teaching Center

June 1, 2016

Vol. 4, Issue 2

### Editor's Note

By Bradley Smith, Assistant Professor of English



Welcome to the Spring 2016 issue of *FSTC News*, the newsletter of the Faculty Scholarship and Teaching Center. The newsletter is designed to help the GSU faculty community stay connected with the faculty development events and initiatives happening here on campus. It also provides a way for faculty to share ideas that might be of general interest to us all as teachers and scholars.

I would like to thank everyone who took the time to attend one or more of the workshops I conducted this past year on the pedagogical use of eportfolios. The workshops led to some lively and useful discussions about reflection, transfer, integrative learning, and assessment. I also enjoyed the opportunity to critically examine with participants various eportfolio models and designs.

#### **Faculty-initiated Learning Community: ePortfolio Research**

This year's dialogue is one that I hope to continue in the future with interested faculty. At this year's Faculty Scholarship Institute, I will discuss the formation of a Faculty-initiated Learning Community on Cross-disciplinary ePortfolio Research. This community will be focused on learning the pedagogical benefits of eportfolios by studying scholarship on eportfolio implementation in a variety of settings, with the ultimate goal of exploring opportunities for research on eportfolio. Faculty who are interested in participating will take part in an informal reading group and will explore opportunities for research projects that grow out of our shared interests. Such projects might investigate the use of portfolios and e-portfolios for facilitating transfer of knowledge, regional community and business outreach, assessment, or other pertinent subjects. I hope you'll join me on June 7 to continue this conversation. If you are interested in joining this community but are unable to attend FSI, please feel free to email me: [bsmith7@govst.edu](mailto:bsmith7@govst.edu) to let me know of your interest.

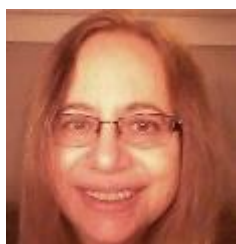
#### **Volume 4, Issue 2**

This issue of *FSTC News* presents articles that will preview some of the faculty development programming for next year and provide updates on important university initiatives. After a note

from FSTC Director, Teri Sosa, the newsletter begins with Dean Lydia Morrow Ruetten's discussion of the benefits of open educational resources and is followed by an article from Thomas Bierdz, who calls attention to the necessity for collaboration in order to successfully implement Universal Design practices. In addition to the faculty-initiated learning community that I am leading on cross-disciplinary eportfolio research, this issue presents another learning community opportunity to be led by Ujvala Rajadhyaksha that will discuss a faculty-initiated learning community on the issue of balancing work and family. Finally, this issue provides faculty with information about the new Center for the Junior Year, written by the center's director, Ned Laff, as well as some of the highlights for using the assessment system, Tk20, by Colleen Sexton and Ann Vendrely.

## A Note from the Director

By Teri Sosa, Director of the Faculty Scholarship and Teaching Center



It has been another active semester with a variety of faculty development opportunities. We have had presentations on service learning, copyright, the Freedom of Information Act (in partnership with the College of Business) and eportfolios. We have also had two faculty writing retreats. In addition, we have partnered with other departments to publicize events of interest to faculty around the university. If you haven't attended an FSTC workshop in a while, check one out next semester!

Our final program of AY 2015-2016 is the Faculty Summer Institute. It will take place on June 7, 2016 from 9 am to 3:30 pm. Our keynote speaker (in partnership with Student Affairs) will be Jillian Kinzie, Ph.D., who is the Associate Director of the Center for Post-Secondary Research & NSSE Institute. Other highlights include the presentation of information on Open Educational Resources, discussions of new Faculty-initiated Learning Communities, a group panel of last year's Fisk Mini-Grant winners on how they have utilized technologies in the classroom, and much, much more. Please note: since this year's FSI is only one day, rather than two days as it was in the past, you will be able to learn a lot in a short time. Please join us.

Next year we will continue to provide programs of general interest to faculty and staff as well as new faculty mentoring—including orientation, which provides information about teaching, research, and service in our university and lunches for untenured faculty, which provide forums for newer faculty to discuss issues specific to joining our community.

Our new FSTC inward-facing website is now available through the quick links menu on the portal. It contains a calendar of FSTC events as well as other events faculty may attend around the university. There are also archived videos from previous presentations. We are growing the site, so stay tuned for improvements and refinements.

In closing, I would like to thank members of the Faculty Development Advisory Council for their work this year. I would also like to extend a special thank you to Brad Smith, this year's faculty in residence, whose work has been instrumental in our success this year.

## Open Educational Resources

By Lydia A. Morrow Ruetten, Dean of the Library



Open Educational Resources (OER) are teaching, learning, and research materials in any medium that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits their free use and re-purposing by others (cc by Cable Green).

So why use OERs? First, it provides you, the faculty member with more choices for your courses, allowing you to use multiple texts, customize and update materials to reflect new research developments, and to reclaim your course based on your expertise. These materials are available for your use permission free. Secondly, it eliminates the cost of the textbook for the student, which is often a barrier to students' success. With OERs, from day 1, your students have 100% free access to all materials digitally. We know that not every student will want to read materials online, so print a few copies at a much reduced cost and make these available through the bookstore for those with that preference.

You might be asking at this point, who develops these materials and why are they making them available at no cost? There are individuals that recognize that the skyrocketing costs of textbooks can indeed be a barrier to student success, and that is why they make their works available free of charge. There are excellent publications available that have been reviewed by faculty members like yourself to assess their quality.

The [University of Minnesota](#) is one excellent example of what other schools have done. Through their College of Education and Human Development, they are part of an [Open Textbook Network](#) and have access to the [Open Textbook Library](#). The Library allows you to browse a variety of books within subject areas that contain table of contents, publication information, reviews of the material, and links to the books themselves.

While the process of converting your course from using a traditional textbook to using OERs may take some time to develop, think about the possibilities you would have in your course and the grateful students you would have.

If you want to learn more about OER, join Dr. Teri Sosa and I at the Faculty Summer Institute on June 7th. If you cannot attend and have questions, please let me know. I will be very happy to answer your questions or get you started. I can be reached at [Lruetten@govst.edu](mailto:Lruetten@govst.edu) or x 4110.

## Universal Design

By Thomas Bierdz, University Lecturer Senior Status in the Division of Education

The living world, according to Charles Darwin and his modern counterpart Richard Dawkins, is based on species' competition and exploitation of environmental niches. In this system, any

living being whose design takes advantage of the ambient environment better than others is most likely to survive and proliferate. Life either adapts to the environment or perishes. This survival of the fittest through the means of natural selection knows nothing of universal design.

Universal design, the practice of creating tools/environments to be accessible to the greatest number of individuals possible without the need for additionally altering the tool/environment, is a unique human endeavor, which is contrary to the above noted system. It is an extension of our species' dominant characteristic: to adapt the environment to our advantage. Our species' capability to transform the environment, rather than allowing natural selection to work its process in us—to change our species to thrive in the environment—has allowed us to exist across the planet, under the sea, and in space.

Practicing universal design is contrary to the common order and yet consistent with our species. This is why we do not find universal design analogs in non-human nature, which helps explain some logical limits and structural considerations for its practice. The practice also demands a departure from elitist values and thoughts: and this is where controversy steps in and this article steps aside.

I shall spare all the insipidness of pedantic paragraphs concerning diversity in the educational system. However, I shall note that like many things, teaching to diversity has its cost and value, both worthy of recognition. Our personal perceptions are paramount to each of us, and where there is uniformity, perceptions are easily shared. Historically our human tool of unified cultures allowed for such uniformity and ease of sharing. But in modernity's multicultural system, this ease of transmission is disrupted for the sake of greater inclusion with costs and benefits for all.

Universal design in the realm of education is a collaborative process, just as education itself is a relationship—at the micro level between student and instructor and institution. Responsibility for universal design is shared by all participating in the educational act. Educationally speaking, the goal of universal design at the course level is widespread access to the course's objectives via the course's content and how students approach that content. Universal design can be conceptualized in a tripartite format: Universal Design of Learning (UDL), Universal Design of Instruction (UDI), and Universal Course Design (UCD).

Meta-cognitively speaking, each area of universal design seeks to answer the same basic question. UDL asks, How does each student access and approach course tools and utilize them? UDI asks, How do instructors anticipate and plan accessibility in course tools for all students? And UCD asks, what must the university do to provide access for all (e.g., syllabus design, structure of related resources)?

## **Work and Family Conflicts of Academics and Working Students - Exploring the Role of Teaching Technology**

By Ujvala Rajadhyaksha, Assistant Professor of Management, Marketing & Entrepreneurship

Has juggling meetings, grading and syllabus preparation ever left you feeling irritable, anxious, or over-worked at the start and end of semesters? Have you ever gotten stressed out trying to figure out childcare options when your university's spring break does not coincide with your children's school break? Have you fervently hoped that an elderly loved one's health would hold up at least until the summer break? Have you had a student email you that she will be unable to attend a class because her kids were down with the flu and she had no one else available to care for them? If you have answered 'yes' or 'sometimes' to any of the above situations, you have witnessed a common phenomenon called work-family conflict.

According to the American Association of University Professionals (AAUP) work and family conflicts of academics is a serious issue, as the nature of academic work is boundless and an academic career requires intense commitment. For most early and mid-career academics, especially women, prime child-bearing and child-rearing years conflict directly with the tenure-track grind. For many late career academics of the 'sandwich generation', care-giving responsibilities for elderly and young dependents may have to be balanced with the taking on of greater responsibilities for administrative work, service, or work required to enhance one's professional reputation. Additional issues of balance can arise given that academic work volleys between being highly demanding at the start and end of semesters, to slackening off at times when classes are not in session. Furthermore, within higher-educational institutions, work-life balance of academics gets pitted against the work-life balance of working students, whose numbers have risen rapidly with the rising costs of college education. Understanding and responding to work-family issues faced by this segment of students, plays an important role in enhancing their chances at college success. It further widens the scope and nature of work-life issues that need addressing on college and university campuses.

At the Faculty Scholarship Institute, I hope to start a dialogue surrounding common causes, consequences and coping mechanisms of work and family conflicts of academics and students that will continue into next year. Since the growth of non-traditional students has spurred more e-learning initiatives, we will also discuss and explore the role that teaching technologies, e.g. learning management systems such as Blackboard, can play in the work and family balance of faculty and students. The hope will be to develop participant interest and commitment to learning one or a few features of Blackboard that could prove useful in facilitating your own or your students' work-life balance, in addition to promoting student retention and success.

## A Welcome to the Center for the Junior Year

By Ned Laff, Director of the Center for the Junior Year



The Center for the Junior Year (CJY) opened its doors March 1. Funded through a Title III grant, the center is designed "to provide a mechanism to ensure student success in matriculating into a major field of study." As I have talked with faculty across campus, the question each has raised is what exactly does that mean. Is it an advising center to help undecided students choose majors? Will it focus on our first-year students? Is it different than

DDP? Will it reach out to other transfer students? What I can tell is that CJY is very much a work in progress.

The Center for the Junior Year is not simply about helping juniors slide into majors. For a student to be ready for the junior year means s/he has set up the stages through first and second year. So, the center, because it will be working with “undecided,” will be reaching back. At the same time, the center will be reaching out to students at our main feeder community colleges to do workshops and connect with students who think they might want to attend GSU.

The center is not simply about “advising.” Students will have an integrative experience. Through the CJY students will be challenged to think about their undergraduate education differently. So teaching will be very much at play, and students will be asked to think about what makes up an undergraduate education. As part of that teaching experience, students will be “tested” to use critical/creative thinking to reflect on their personal, educational, and personal goals. The center will help students learn to challenge the myth of being undecided by helping them look at their own “hidden intellectualism” (Graff, *Clueless in Academe*, 2003 and *They Say, I Say*, 2007) and discover the learning opportunities that translate their hidden intellectualism into the 5 basic components from which students craft an integrated field of study. So, learning to think about the nature of curriculum, about “charting” a course of study, is also at play.

The center will also work hand-in-hand with Career Services. A driving philosophy is that students cannot make good academic decisions in a career development vacuum. This is as true for students considering graduate and professional school as it is for students wanting to land a good job with a bachelor’s degree. CJY will actively challenge students to engage Career Service’s “4 Year Career Plan to Success.” With the help of Career Services, CJY will challenge students to look at the relationship between their hidden intellectualism and the “hidden job” market and examine how to work with Career Services to make networking connections – whether that be with the Grossman Institute of Neurosciences at the University of Chicago or with Peggy Kusinski at NBC Sports.

So let me extend an open invitation to stop by. The center is housed in C1321. You will always find good conversation. CJY looks at the undergraduate experience and curricula across the university as a kaleidoscope that provides new options with every turn. You will always find surprising ways to think about how to engage undergraduates. And we can learn from you about how the center can support your efforts.

## **Tk20 – Your Professional Showcase!**

By Colleen M. Sexton and Ann Vendrely, Associate Provosts and Associate Vice Presidents for Academic Affairs



As Steve Jobs once said, “Technology is nothing. What’s important is that you have a faith in people, that they’re basically good and smart, and if you give them tools, they’ll do wonderful things with them.” In thinking about how to roll out Tk20 across campus this quotation couldn’t be more appropriate. GSU has invested in a digital tool that can do a variety of tasks, organized as modules, within one system. Yet it is only as powerful as the end user. So if you’re the

kind of user that likes to just play with technology, knowing that no matter what you do you can’t screw it up, then logging into Tk20 at <http://govst.tk20.com> with your GSU username and password right now will open up a whole new playground for you—from creating a virtual file cabinet to creating a professional portfolio to showcase your talents, no matter the file format, i.e. documents, images, videos, etc. Anything you create in Tk20 can be shared, used as a template, or submitted for assessment either through Tk20 or pushed out from the course you’ve built in Blackboard.

If you prefer a bit more direction with your technology, then know that of the various things that can be created via Tk20, there are three modules in particular that can showcase the impact of your teaching and your contributions to the profession, while simultaneously facilitating data collection for university-wide accreditation needs: Portfolios, Signature Assignments /Juried Assignments, and Faculty Qualifications. For instance, if you’re working with a program where assessment is dictated by a set of national standards, where students are expected to demonstrate competency for each element of the standard, then learning how to use the Assessment Portfolio module is the training you’ll need. However, if you just want to create a portfolio that will allow you or your students the opportunity to showcase talents in innovative and unique ways, then the Presentation Portfolio module is what you’ll want to play with. The power of Tk20 is that once a Presentation Portfolio is built it can be linked to an Assessment Portfolio for evaluation at a later date. During the week of August 15th – 19th we will be hosting training sessions on the portfolio modules.

## **Portfolio Development**

As many of you have already discovered, if you attended any of the portfolio conversations hosted by the Faculty Scholarship and Teaching Center over this past academic year, there’s more to building a portfolio than having software to build it in. If you want to get a jump on portfolio development over the summer, here are a few questions you’ll need to consider before you actually start to build in Tk20: 1) Who is your audience? Is it for faculty to assess student progress toward a certain set of standards, or is it for students to showcase their skills and understanding of program outcomes in unique and clever ways? Or is it both? 2) Are there “must haves” you expect the students to put into the portfolio? Or do you want the student to have carte blanche in the development and showcasing of their knowledge and skills? 3) Will it be assessed? If so how will it be assessed and how often? If you’re going to use assessment rubrics what will those look like? 4) Is this a cumulative portfolio – one which the student contributes to each semester? Or is it built as part of a capstone experience? Once you’ve



made your decisions on the parts and pieces of the portfolio, the building of it in Tk20 will be simplified.



### **Juried Assessment**

There are several ways in which assessment can occur and Tk20 can assist with many of them. As noted above, an electronic portfolio can be used for assessment. Another can occur through the use of signature assignments. An oversight charge of the General Education Council is the assessment of student progress toward meeting the General Education Student Learning Outcomes (GE SLOs). During this past school year the GE Council has facilitated the development of learning communities around the GE outcomes for foundational knowledge, practical skills, social responsibility, and integrative learning. Faculty members in those learning communities have used signature assignments, assessed through the use of co-developed rubrics aligned to GE SLOs, to create snapshots of student progress toward meeting those outcomes. Tk20 can facilitate the work of the learning communities through the creation of signature assignments that can be linked to the Blackboard course assignments, collected in Tk20, and evaluated at the course level with assessment data feeding back to the Blackboard course. Once evaluated for course needs, the signature assignment can still be accessed via Tk20 for later assessment by the learning community through the use of the Juried Assessment feature. The wonderful thing about this feature is that all of this is done by just having your students sign into your course in Blackboard. Once the assignment is built in Tk20 and properly linked to your Blackboard course, the students have no need to log into two separate systems. Once logged into Blackboard, through its “single sign-on” feature, the students are moving between the learning (Bb) and assessment (Tk20) environments seamlessly.

By early August the staff from the Center for Online Teaching and Learning will be fully trained in the development of Signature Assignments in Tk20. They will be able to assist you as they have always done with your Blackboard course needs, to build those assignments in Tk20, and connect them to your Blackboard course, so that you can function in the Blackboard environment for course needs, yet collect the signature assignments for course, program, and/or university wide assessment needs in Tk20.

### **Faculty Qualifications Module**

One of the modules in Tk20 that can showcase all of the wonderful things you do as faculty is the Faculty Qualifications module. This feature gives you the power of creating an online resume that is accessible anywhere at any time organized by categories that are important to you and program accreditors. For instance, under Teaching you can prepopulate this area with the names and terms of any course you taught at the university that was already built into Tk20; Service can be displayed by categories such as community, professional, and institutional; and Research can include categories such as books, journal articles, software development, and

technical reports. Tk20 gives you the flexibility of adding categories to suit your professional activities. As GSU elects to roll-out the new Graphite view of Tk20, the Faculty Qualifications module will be included in your accounts by July. Once available you'll find the module in the sidebar on the left side of the page. The template found there is just the starting point; you can add or remove categories that best meet your needs. Professional development for working with the Faculty Qualifications module will begin once the fall term has commenced. While all faculty members are welcome to take advantage of this feature, training on this module, specific to the needs of all first- and second-year faculty members will take place in September and October. Additionally, online tutorials will be made available for those wishing to play with this feature on their own time.

As one self-described "user geek and technologies enthusiast" put it "The technology you use impresses no one. The experience you create with it is everything" (Sean Gerety – User Experience Architect at Newell Rubbermaid). Tk20 gives you and your students the power to showcase those experiences. Please consider taking advantage of Tk20 by logging in, playing around, and participating in our future training opportunities.



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