

# focus

on university teaching and learning

## The STLHE Conference: Improving Teaching and Learning

The Office of Instructional Development and Technology (OIDT) of Dalhousie University is honoured to host the Eleventh Annual Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education Conference in Halifax, June 15th to 18th, 1991. We are publishing this special issue of our new OIDT bulletin, "Focus on University Teaching and Learning", to publicize this major Conference and to introduce our readers to the STLHE.

The Eleventh STLHE Conference is the first to be held in Atlantic Canada. In the spirit of the Society, this year's Conference will feature interactive sessions led by innovative and enthusiastic college and university faculty from institutions throughout Canada and the United States. Programme Chair, Eileen Herteis, is pleased to announce plans for over 80 sessions from presenters representing all ten Canadian provinces and twelve states. The majority of the 200 to 250 participants will be Canadians and Americans, but a small number are expected from abroad (we already have one registrant from Singapore).

What is the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education? The STLHE is an association of academics interested in improving the quality of instruction in colleges and universities. The aim of the Society is to promote the improvement of teaching and learning in higher education by organizing conferences and workshops, issuing publications such as newsletters and monographs, and collaborating with other organizations interested in the enhancement of teaching and learning. Its members are ordinarily faculty and instructional developers from institutions of post-secondary education across Canada and in some cases beyond. A one year membership in the Society is included in the cost of attending the Annual Conference; alternatively, individuals may join or continue membership by paying a small annual fee (currently \$10.00).

The Society's existence as a formal entity is relatively new. However, the Society's founders (who now comprise the Steering Committee) met informally for a number of years at teaching and learning conferences prior to the development of STLHE as the sponsoring organization for these events. The first official STLHE Conference took place in Guelph in 1981. Subsequent annual events were held at various universities throughout Ontario. In 1989, the Society held its Annual Conference in Edmonton, at the University of Alberta. The 1990 Conference was organized at McGill University in Montreal.

Dr. Alan Blizzard of McMaster University is the Co-ordinator of the STLHE. He oversees the affairs of the Society and takes an active role in the work of the Conference Programme Committee. Dr. Christopher Knapper, of the University of Waterloo, was the first Co-ordinator of the Society. Dr. Dale Roy, also of McMaster University, oversees the 3M-STLHE Teaching Fellowships. Up to 10 Fellowships are awarded each year. The award includes a citation and an invitation to participate in a three-day retreat at Chateau Montebello in Quebec. The retreat has proved to be very popular with the 3M Fellows as it provides an opportunity for sharing past teaching experiences and allowing new ideas to take shape. The retreat also serves as a reward for the achievements of the Fellows, who represent a wide variety of Canadian universities and academic disciplines. The Fellowships now constitute a recognized, prestigious national award for excellence in teaching and educational leadership.

The Eleventh Annual Conference of the STLHE is significant for several reasons. The Society will create new interest in issues associated with the improvement of university teaching and learning in Atlantic Canada: over 20 of the sessions have been organized by faculty from this region and some universities in Atlantic Canada plan to send large delegations to the Conference. It is important for Dalhousie University and its Office of Instructional Development and Technology: several of the presenters are from Dalhousie and the OIDT, after only two years of operation, has been able to draw local attention to major issues in the field of instructional development by hosting this major event and attracting leaders in the field to the Conference.

This bulletin will help give you a taste of what to expect at this year's STLHE Conference as it includes the presenters' descriptions of several of the sessions. But remember, there are many more which are not described here. What's more, the STLHE Conference encourages dialogue and exchange by providing a number of informal social events during the course of the Conference. We look forward to seeing you in June right here on the campus of Dalhousie University.

Alan Wright  
Conference Chair

# Some Conference Highlights

## TEACHING AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

### Keynote Activity

**Écoutez, n'écrivez pas/Put down your pens, do not write**

*Alex Fancy, Department of French and Spanish, Mount Allison University*

Une classe de français dans une école anglophone. Il y a beaucoup de vraisemblance: le professeur est harcelé, les élèves sont dans la lune, le haut-parleur beugle sans cesse. Le discours pédagogique est déplacé, l'énergie affective se gaspille, il faut s'attendre au pire. La trente-neuvième représentation d'une comédie qui suscitera des réflexions sérieuses.

The spectator is invited into a french class, in an anglophone school or college, where only the worst can happen. The pedagogical discourse seems irrelevant, the students inhabit distant mindscapes and the loudspeaker has a life of its own. Is this scenario absurd, or does it evoke an absurd reality? The thirty-ninth performance of a comedy with very serious overtones.

Tintamarre is a bilingual theatre troupe located at Mount Allison; its goals are: (1) to promote biculturalism and bilingualism, at Mount Allison and in the region; and (2) to promote an appreciation for the roles which theatre can play, in education and in society.

### Evaluating Teaching

**The Teaching Portfolio: Documenting Teaching and Learning in Higher Education**

*Peter Seldin, Management Department, Pace University*  
*Linda Annis, Center for Teaching and Learning, Ball State University*

The teaching portfolio is a very useful way for professors to document their effectiveness in their classroom for personnel decisions or improvement of teaching performance. In this active learning workshop, the presenters will (a) discuss the portfolio concept; (b) describe a successful recent project to introduce the use of the portfolio for both personnel decisions and teaching improvement purposes at one institution; and (c) offer specific suggestions for portfolio use at other colleges and universities.

**Understanding Scholarship: Expanding its meaning and practice in teaching**

*Penny Hansen, Assistant Dean, Memorial University of Nfld.*  
*K.B. Roberts, Professor Emeritus, Memorial University of Nfld.*  
Scholarship is usually recognized in the academic community only in terms of research and publication. Yet, properly defined and practiced, it informs all the diverse activities of faculty members. Teachers and promotion and tenure committees should recognize scholarship as an essential component of good teaching, differentiated from teaching effectiveness. We must determine what constitutes evidence of scholarship in teaching and learn how to evaluate it.

### En Français

**Pour une redéfinition du rôle de l'écrit dans l'apprentissage du français langue seconde**

*Myriam deBie Waller, Département d'études françaises, Université York*

*Karen Whalen, Département d'études françaises, Université York*

Les cours de langue, de linguistique et de littérature qui se donnent en français langue seconde ont tendance à donner un rôle évaluateur à l'expression écrite. L'enseignant/e met l'emphase sur le contenu informationnel de la matière à apprendre et teste ensuite les connaissances de ce contenu par le biais de l'écrit. Dans cette perspective, on n'apprend pas à écrire. On utilise l'écrit plutôt pour évaluer les connaissances en langue, linguistique et en littérature. Dans cette communication, nous proposons de redéfinir le rôle de l'écrit dans l'acquisition des connaissances en français langue seconde. À l'appui des expériences vécues dans un cours de langue et dans un cours de traduction, nous exposerons une série d'activités d'écriture visant à développer à la fois les savoirs et le savoir écrire chez l'apprenant.

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## Teaching Methods

### From Teachers' Thinking to Teachers' Teaching: A Model for Course Design and Implementation

*Janet L. Malone, Director, Center for the Promotion of Excellence in Teaching, University of Wisconsin/Stevens Point*  
Designing courses in which all components (objectives, learning activities, and evaluation procedures) reflect the context in which the course is taught and are each congruent with the others requires that teachers utilize higher order thinking skills. This interactive workshop will present a model for helping teachers achieve these goals as they develop courses. The workshop will involve a mini-lecture, small group work, and large group discussion

### Preparing our Students for Successful Learning Experiences - An Industrial Perspective

*Dale G. Retallack, Department of Engineering, Dalhousie University*

A demonstration of an approach used in 1st and 2nd year engineering classes to orient and prepare students, in order to enable them to adjust more easily to university life, perform more successfully, and enjoy themselves. The approach borrows heavily from the presenters' previous industrial experiences, and incorporates Management by Objectives, motivational techniques, and specific 'training' for the tasks facing our students. [Note: If you were planning on bypassing this session, be careful: it might be more fun than it looks!]

### Encouraging Peer Directed Learning

*John Tidswell, Department of Mechanical Engineering, University of New Brunswick*  
*William J. Mullin, Department of Mechanical Engineering, University of New Brunswick*

Peer Directed Learning (PDL) is a strategy that allows students, even in large classes, to be engaged in collaborative efforts while an emphasis on individual mastery is maintained. Small groups of participants will each define a scenario and work towards ways of implementing PDL in that setting. Concepts and information strategies will be consolidated through presenter-led group interaction.

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## Evaluating Students

### Contract Grading: An Alternative Approach to Student Evaluation

*Sandy Fraser, Acadia University*

The psychological principles underlying contract grading will be identified. The resulting elements necessary in an effective contracting scheme will be explained. Advantages and disadvantages will be outlined. Participants will then develop contracts based on the courses they teach. A monograph containing a complete description of contract grading will be provided for each participant.

### Marking a Student Paper in the Presence of the Author

*Terry Pratt, Department of English, University of Prince Edward Island*

Participants evaluate, alone and together, a short essay for an English

Composition course. After discussion of what comments should be written on this essay, the presenter demonstrates an alternate marketing method: an individual tutorial, with the essay not seen until that moment. Participants hear a twenty-minute audio tape of a genuine tutorial session, involving the same essay they have just marked. Comparisons follow.

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## Teaching Large Classes

### Educational Strategies Which Promote Higher-Order Learning Objectives in Large Classes

*Marilyn M. Robinson, Coordinator, Education Development Office, The University of Western Ontario*  
*N. Colin Baird, Professor, Department of Chemistry, The University of Western Ontario*

In the '90s faculty find themselves teaching their students in larger and larger classes. This session will be run interactively using both large and small group formats. The participants will address the mechanisms by which higher-order learning objectives can be achieved by educational strategies (teaching techniques, course and evaluation formats, etc.) which are feasible in large classes. The ideas generated at this session will be summarized in a resource document and distributed to the STLHE membership.

### Teaching Assistants - The Real Assets in Large Classes

*Leo Vining, Department of Biology, Dalhousie University*  
*Patricia Harding, Department of Biology, Dalhousie University*  
Teaching assistants will be most effective if we recognize two essential features: that we must openly discuss the unique advantages they have as teachers in our classes and encourage them to make the most of these advantages, and we must recognize that they are inexperienced as teachers, and are not in a position to control the content they are expected to teach. It becomes the direct responsibility of the faculty they teach with to prepare them properly; this takes effort and organization.

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## Faculty Development/Instructional Improvement

### Faculty Development: Different Babies, Lots of Bath Water

*Maurry Epstein, Vanier College*

Consideration of the case of a mythical but realistic college will reveal that Faculty Development (FD) is more than arranging the occasional workshop for "interested faculty". FD's mandate and objectives need to be clear to all concerned. We will discuss the variety of needs, clientele, programming and political agenda that must be addressed. We will share our own institutional concerns, further develop a broadly based understanding of the FD mission and expand our network of FD colleagues.

### Issues Highlighted Through Peer Consultation

*Bente Roed, Coordinator CCTL, University of Alberta*

Peer consultation at the University of Alberta is a process through which one faculty member collaborates with another to assist in improving teaching with the ultimate goal of further facilitating

students' learning. Voluntary and confidential, the program has been successful and has assisted 129 clients to date. The study constitutes a review and summary of client files from fall 1987 to 1990, totalling 45 consultations. I intend to present the major issues identified by clients and students in these case studies, followed by the strategies and recommendations that the consultant shared with the client

### Where Can I Find Someone to Talk to About Teaching?

*Marianne and John Reiff, University of California at Santa Barbara*

*Ron Sheese and Karen Whalen, York University*

Faculty members interested in teaching critical thinking to their students, particularly with the use of writing exercises and collaborative learning techniques, often feel that they are working in isolation. This session will consider how one can develop a network of sympathetic colleagues at the Department, University and Inter-university level. Organizers will describe from their experience, and participants will plan, a set of activities which can have this result.

### Teaching Improvement Through Cooperative Dialogue

*Richard Tiberius, Centre for Studies in Medical Education, University of Toronto*

*Katharine Reimer Janzen, Seneca College of Applied Arts and Technology*

Participants will engage in a condensed version of a teaching improvement method based on the establishment of cooperative dialogues between teachers and students. Pairs of teachers

voluntarily form collaborative partnerships for the purpose of increasing the effectiveness of their teaching. The key to the success of the method is the establishment of collaborative dialogues characterized by a high level of trust, cooperativeness and openness.

## Teaching Problem Solving

### An Approach to Teaching Problem Solving

*Trev Dickinson, School of Engineering, University of Guelph*

There is considerable evidence that the solving of a problem requires the satisfactory completion of a number of steps. There is also evidence that individual problem solvers undertake these steps in their own unique ways. How then should we teach problem solving; or how can we help students discover the problem solving approach which works best for them? This workshop affords the participants an opportunity to solve some problems, to observe others solving problems, to reflect upon and discuss how we seem to solve problems, to evaluate the technique used in the workshop as a method for teaching problem solving, and to share ideas on other methods.

### Failure: The Path to Success

*Judith Kalman, English Department, Concordia University*

Although we try to be conscious of the many elements that comprise effective teaching, sometimes the "class personality" works in contrary motion to our efforts. The question this presentation wishes to consider is: What happens when our efforts fail and we see struggle and dislocation rather than integrative learning? We will look at various student perceptions and frame a dialogue around them concentrating on framing the dilemma in a problem-solving mode.

- Over sixty other sessions are also scheduled -

Please register me for the 11th Annual Conference on Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, June 15-18, 1991

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ Province: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Registration fee: (Includes breaks lunches, harbour cruise and reception)	\$140.00 (\$70.00 Full Time Students*)
Late Registration Fee (after April 30th)	\$160.00 (\$80.00 Full Time Students*)
Saturday evening buffet and social (not included in registration fee)	\$ 10.00
Companions' Tickets: Buffet _____ @ \$10.00	\$ _____
Cruise _____ @ \$10.00	\$ _____
Reception _____ @ \$ 5.00	\$ _____
<b>Cheque Enclosed TOTAL</b>	\$ _____

Please send me accommodation information Residence \_\_\_\_\_ Off Campus \_\_\_\_\_

Make cheques payable in Canadian funds to **Dalhousie University**.

\* Students must submit proof of full-time registration with this form

**Registration includes  
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