Engaging communities locally and globally

Students and faculty make the world a better place

PsTL POSTS

SUMMER 2011

News from the Department of Postsecondary Teaching and Learning

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College of Education + Human Development

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inquire + engage + collaborate + connect + inspire
LEARNING COMMUNITIES: Designing Critical Connections

A Learning Community is an integral part of each student’s First Year Experience (FYE). Instructors team up to make connections across their disciplines and courses through themes and skills. This spring, students chose from twelve pairings of courses from a range of subjects that meet both liberal education and CEHD major requirements.

Students join a Learning Community (LC) and attend both classes. Throughout the semester faculty exchange ideas and might attend one another’s class to strengthen connections, discussions, activities, and assignments that support student development of integrative thinking and learning.

According to faculty members, the LC is a vastly improved strategy for developing critical thinking, interdisciplinary analysis, collaboration, and preparation for careers and life roles. LC projects encourage student self-awareness as well as group participation and student friendships, which lead to a broader multicultural experience. LCs require group work and team projects, thus allowing students to pursue broader perspectives and encouraging them to voice their opinions.

“Confidence in public speaking” is a skill one student said she developed in her LC classes. Faculty members say they notice lively class dialogue, which they attribute to the diversity of group projects where students get to know one another.

Why does the LC work so well? In a phrase, “preliminary planning based on developmental research.” Long before spring, faculty partners plan discipline pairings that will inform student interest and development. The teaching teams address curriculum issues, review course strategies, and plan how to link student work from one community to another. Faculty members enjoy collaboration and cooperation in bringing other disciplines to bear on a particular subject they would otherwise teach in isolation.
WELCOME to our second issue of *PsTL Posts*, which celebrates the importance of engagement in education. *Engagement* describes learning that, in the classroom and beyond, taps into the transformative potential of linking academics, personal commitment, and public need. Engaged teaching and learning are informed by and responsive to the current hopes, challenges, and conditions of education.

Engaged learning environments require students to be active participants and require faculty to design space for students to experience the process of forming hypotheses, collecting and analyzing evidence, weighing multiple perspectives, and arriving at critical conclusions.

Engaged research on teaching and learning begins from the assumptions that knowing how to teach is intimately bound up in knowing who we are teaching, and knowing how to adapt our pedagogy so as to create inclusive, high-impact learning experiences that will support productive futures for our students.

It has been a pleasure to hear from many of you; please stay in touch by emailing us at pstlpost@umn.edu or arranging a visit. In the meantime, enjoy this issue!

AMY LEE, Department Chair, Postsecondary Teaching and Learning

By exploring current and controversial issues that they care about—racial intolerance, ethnicity, heritage, civility, etc.—students learn about one another and also develop the ability to integrate various approaches to a theme. Class engagement takes many forms: reading, writing, art, performance, music, trips, even service-learning in several of the LCs. Engagement is critical for success; it means that students attend class, stay in school, develop friendships, and open up. A student for whom English is not a first language, said of an LC linking algebra and history, “Every one of us felt a sense of belonging, even though we are from different backgrounds. … I felt that my own understanding was significantly enhanced by the knowledge and experience of others.”

“The Power of Shared Stories” Learning Community was about finding one’s identity through coursework in literature, art, and performance. Linda Buturian taught multicultural perspectives in U.S. literature, while Tina Frederickson’s students revealed their cultural identity through art and performance. Students “are most enjoying getting to know each other, through discussing issues related to diversity, identity, and other concepts as they surface in the literary texts we’ve been reading,” said Buturian. Frederickson’s students completed a personal identity project with images and accompanying text that became part of a collective cultural statement about them, whether it was ethnic traditions, gender issues, spiritual beliefs, or economic challenges. Students then performed their piece before an invited audience. Frederickson commented that “students enjoyed attending theatrical performances together, an outdoor ‘Art Hunt’ done in teams, and many other creative activities conducted during class—writing,

One Learning Community student wrote, “I enjoy the contrast between the two classes, because it strengthens each of the areas of study in a way that is not visible beforehand.” Another LC student said, “I learned many new things and acquired a new perspective due to two separate classes being connected.”

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visual art, dance, music.” She saw students step outside their regular norms of classroom behavior.

Gary Peter’s and KC Harrison’s LC theme was “Rights, Community, and Identity: Reflections in Law and Literature” and both teachers are enthusiastic about the positive results they saw in their students. Harrison, who teaches U.S. literature, said, “Having the same group of students in two classes seems to bond them. We see our students together outside of the classroom, and that’s a sign that they are connecting with one another.” She selected multicultural texts that captured her students’ curiosity and exercises where students portrayed characters they read about. Students explored a range of questions about American identity within broad social, historical, political, and literary contexts. Peter taught a class on citizenship and multicultural democracy where students worked in groups to dramatize trial cases; they acted out roles as attorney, witness, and jury. Peter said, “These students were exposed to the nature of legal and personal responsibility with particular attention to race, class, gender, and civil rights.” Peter, who is a lawyer by training and also earned an MFA, commented, “Our PsTL classes are small, like those in a small liberal arts college, so our students receive personal attention and get to know one another.” Harrison added, “integrated themes around subjects personal to students helped propel active class participation.”

“Multicultural Perspectives on Family and Community” Learning Community paired a Department of Family Social Science course with a PsTL course on sociology. Students learned more about themselves and the world around them while exposed to a possible future area of content study. One student said, “My learning experience has taught me that by helping others, I learn a lot from the students. I am learning about myself, and about others around me.” Another student wrote, “I am learning how two different disciplines work together and relate to each other.” Karen Miksch’s class on introduction to sociology focused on the tools to better understand (and question) our social world and ways to work together with community groups to bring about social change. William Goodman’s class on family social science exposed students to family dynamics. Interdepartmental LCs bridge connections for students to various majors in the College of Education and Human Development. Students in this LC also conducted a service-learning project in the community. Another student said, “I really enjoyed my learning experience here in the LC because we had the chance to reach out to the community and volunteer. I feel more connected and engaged within LC.”

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The Common Book is read by all first year CEHD students, faculty members, and staff. For 2011 the Common Book is Outcasts United by Warren St. John. It is a true story about the Fugees, a soccer club for boys from families of refugees from war-torn nations. It follows the challenges the coach, the community, and these young people face confronting prejudice, finding funding and a practice field, living with memories of tragedy in their home countries, etc., and their triumphs on and off the field.

SAVE THESE DATES: The author and the coach, Luma Mufleh, will visit with students in the FYI course and deliver public evening lectures on Tuesday, October 25, 2011, and Tuesday, November 1, 2011.

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recognized that GC students often were those who “fell through the cracks but had potential if only given a good chance.”

Everything about GC was in sync with Barbara’s notion of doing good work and making a difference. Its community culture focused on student success and welcomed and respected all students no matter where they came from. Its dedicated faculty engaged in pioneering research on developmental education, which was highly respected throughout the academic world.

Barbara valued her interface with students. She saw “how students benefited from earning GC’s associate in arts degree, when they never thought they’d be capable of college-level study.” She says, “I sensed the confidence students felt when they had a tangible representation of their accomplishments.” And, although students from GC moved on to other departments and schools during Barbara’s tenure, she understands why so many of them continued to identify with GC. She, too, earned her B.G.S. degree in Child Care Administration (GC, ED & COM courses) there.

Since retiring from the General College in 1999, Barbara has taken an active role in continuing its legacy and reputation. As GC transitioned to PsTL, she was determined to create a legacy and a home for GC alumni. Having served as the GC representative on the National Alumni Board and a member of the GC Alumni Society Board, it was a natural segue to join the CEHD Alumni Society Board to be both advocate and inspiration. Barbara also mentors African American student athletes at the University, partly in memory of her star quarterback brother, Sandy Stephens, who took the Gophers to the Rose Bowl in 1961 and 1962. She has served on the CEHD Women’s Philanthropic Leadership Circle and, with unstoppable energy and commitment, she works part time at the Osseo Area Schools.

Some people carry a sense of spirit and citizenship throughout their lives. Barbara is one of those people and we’re glad we have her.

Over the 34 years she worked in the General College, Barbara Stephens Foster might have greeted every student who came through the doors. She loved being there, especially for the students—the younger Stephens twins, Raymond and Joyce, among them. She

worldwide collaborators know, Jeanne Higbee has a commitment to and love of teaching and learning excelled by no one. Typically, Jeanne’s dealings with students involve personal attention and support of diverse learning styles inside and outside the classroom. Her contributions to solving the contemporary challenges of higher education are unique.

Jeanne is the champion for Universal Instructional Design and its adaptation into realistic, student-based practices of integrated multicultural instructional design that works.

Jeanne’s legacy, evident in her teaching, research, and educational leadership, is to demonstrate to faculty that their obligation extends beyond access to success, to ensuring that the environments students enter enable them to achieve their full potential.

Congratulations to Jeanne Higbee

This PsTL faculty leader is one of eight University recipients honored with the 2011 Horace T. Morse-University of Minnesota Alumni Association Award for Outstanding Contributions to Undergraduate Education.

Professor Jeanne Higbee is a dedicated, innovative, and outstanding educator. Her teaching, research, and leadership have improved the quality of undergraduate education at the University of Minnesota, throughout the U.S., and internationally.

As her PsTL colleagues, students, and
PsTL engagement activities model professional development partnerships, particularly with our richly diverse community. Whether the venue is research, teaching and learning, or service and outreach, PsTL students and faculty members strive to build mutually respectful and beneficial relationships with collaborating local, national, and international communities.

Service-Learning Students Help Nonprofit Assess and Utilize Data

Service-learning can be a critical component of the First Year Experience, allowing students yet another way to integrate scholarship with direct experience (a “lived text”) while meeting the needs and concerns of diverse communities. As part of their coursework students can work two to three hours per week with a community partner on a project appropriate to their skill level. Students learn by doing and are expected to process their experience through reflective learning.

Several PsTL students in the introductory statistics course have demonstrated their understanding of the basic concepts of statistics as a fundamental liberal education skill. Working with Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio (CLUES), PsTL students conducted a statistical evaluation of three programs in economic advancement covering employment, education, and financial empowerment. CLUES provides behavioral health and human services, assisting families in supporting individuals in crisis (www.clues.org). The students looked at data collected over the last few years in light of a select number of questions/issues that will help the agency assess its impact in the community, their return on investment, and the wage difference after services are provided.

In addressing the objectives of service-learning, Associate Professor Irene Duranczyk says, “I want these students to be good ‘statistical citizens’—to be able to recognize, comprehend, explain, critically evaluate, and make decisions from a variety of data information sources. This experience connects classroom learning with cultural, social, and practical applications, with opportunities for independent and group study.”

The Juvenile Probation Mentoring Program (JPMP) at the Hennepin County Juvenile Probation is another service-learning project. It links probationers to college students and community members to provide positive roles outside the criminal justice system. PsTL students gathered data on the effectiveness of recruitment, training, and retention of mentors.

PsTL service-learning students recently participated with other nonprofits, including: YMCA University branch, OutFront Minnesota, Resource Minnesota, American Red Cross, and Minneapolis Public Schools Gay-Straight Alliance.

eCIS: Building Bridges for Tomorrow’s College Students

Because some high school students are not ready for college—for the freedom, the self-discipline, or the workload—their success in college has been negligible. PsTL team members have been helping students get a head start and prepare psychologically for coursework in college before they get there.

The program, called Entry Point College in the Schools (eCIS), brings more rigorous courses from the colleges to the high schools, particularly in communities where students are in the academic middle—students of color, first generation college-bound students, and students from low economic status families. eCIS aims to increase access to and success in postsecondary study by designating certain courses as “entry points” for the University’s dual-enrollment program. Components of the program include:

• Interactive pedagogy helps students draw on what they already know or care about—through cooperative group learning and using their own experiences, insights, and abilities;
• Regular cycles of practice and individual feedback encourages students to apply what they’ve learned to more challenging assignments; and
• Activities and assignments promote learning and guide students to reflect on their learning (critical thinking) and to recognize factors that enhance or impede it.
Barbara Hodne, PsTL faculty member, has been a strong supporter of eCIS and points out some of the challenges: “First, we strive to maintain rigor of the coursework for students with lower GPAs and class ranks. Second, we want to ensure that students are adequately supported within the courses and outside as well, and that they know how to access these supports. And, third, we need to articulate students’ preparedness to their school personnel so we are certain we have a good match for the eCIS courses.”

Three courses were offered in 2009–2010: Mathematical Modeling and Prediction; Physics by Inquiry; and Writing Studio. After this pilot year, an overwhelming number of students felt engaged in their school work: 93 percent of students agreed/strongly agreed that they felt comfortable in class discussing ideas; 85 percent agreed/strongly agreed that they contributed to class discussion; and 92 percent agreed/strongly agreed that they felt interested in class.

Of students saying that their academic development was “some” and “a lot,” 89 percent said they developed as a writer; 90 percent said that they developed as a math student; and 91 percent said that they were able to figure things out for themselves. One student in Writing Studio said, “This class has influenced me to go to college because this class proves that I am capable of doing college writing.”

The eCIS plan has significantly influenced students’ chances of success in their first postsecondary classes. One student realized the role of a college student: “I finally stopped asking for help from others and started to help myself.”

PsTL Reaches and Teaches in Mozambican School

“Surrounded by little giggles” is how Senior Teaching Specialist Jill Trites often describes her teaching experiences at the non-profit elementary RAIS school in Mafarinha, Mozambique. As a participant in the International Service-Learning Educator Fellowship (ISLE), Trites will spend a month in Africa this summer developing a learning abroad course for CEHD students. ISLE is a CEHD-based professional development program that supports instructors in designing long-term collaborations with communities around the world.

Trites will be returning to Mozambique, one of the world’s poorest countries, to facilitate a workshop for educators, teach English to first through fifth graders, and serve as a resource for the RAIS organization, which includes a daycare, two preschools, a teaching farm, a teaching bakery, an AIDS hospice, a pharmacy and clinic, and a housing project. In addition, Jill will investigate housing, potential service-learning partnerships, and transportation options.

Trites’ first trip to Mozambique in 2008 was a voyage of discovery that left her with a strong sense of purpose. She returned the following two years bringing school supplies provided by CEHD colleagues, an English curriculum, medical supplies, and clothing. Jill describes her experiences in Mozambique as “Amazing yet challenging: I continue to go because I have a special connection with the people and culture. I have developed relationships with educators, and I believe we have so much to share about teaching, our cultures, and our commitment to making a difference. It’s become like a second home to me.”

Trites will facilitate a teaching workshop for local teachers to develop skills in classroom management, health practices, and the teaching of reading, writing, and mathematics.

After spending several weeks in Mozambique, Trites will travel to Dakar, Senegal, to meet with a University of Minnesota affiliate to determine the possibilities for a future learning abroad course in that area. Trites will also meet with colleagues who work in youth development, AIDS education, eco-tourism, adult literacy projects, micro-finance programs, and women’s centers to determine if there are opportunities to develop long-term partnerships. Upon her return to the U.S., Trites will develop a service-learning-abroad course that will be offered to students in May 2013. By leading such a course, she hopes to provide students with opportunities that are academically challenging and personally enriching while making a difference in an African community.
young girl of a rural village in Ethiopia, accustomed to housework, farm chores, and schoolwork, is forced to care for her new baby sister when her mother dies in childbirth. Add social disruption and hardship. At age 11 she and three siblings are transported to Minneapolis by an uncle, and within days all are put into school among mostly middle-class urban white kids, where they cannot understand or speak a word of English. They assimilate—somewhat. The older brother graduates from the University of Minnesota as a chemistry major and goes to medical school, a sister graduates with dual degrees in Family Social Science and Sociology, and she graduates from Family Social Science and pursues a master’s degree in Social Work.

But this is not fiction; it is a true story! The story of Chaltu Hassan. Chaltu is Oromo. Oromo is an ancient culture and ethnic group inhabiting northeast and east Africa with about 30 million members today. Minneapolis has the largest Oromo diaspora in the U.S.

Through her years in middle school and high school, Chaltu understood that education was her job—that learning English, getting good grades, accumulating as much knowledge as she could were her responsibility in her new country. She said that she and her siblings studied early in the morning before breakfast and any other free time. She was used to “doing better and trying harder” all her life. And in Minnesota her purpose and focus were evolving into a vision that she wanted to fulfill her life helping Oromo and other immigrant-refugees build healthy and useful lives in America. Besides academic achievement, what she took away from her classwork was that teachers and advisers were there to help her succeed.

She now reflects, “I was a strange person, a novelty to others in the community and at school. At first I had no idea what was going on, but I knew I had to learn everything I could.” At Columbia Heights High School, Chaltu developed a plan to get better in English by reading picture books. She remembers her teachers as caring and passionate about teaching, and that combined with small classes helped her blossom as a student.

Chaltu Hassan reflects on her high school identity: “I lived in two worlds—Americanized at school and Oromo at home. I had ideas of what I wanted to do and I stayed very close to my advisers. I went to them with my plan and I listened to their ideas and comments. Teachers and advisers do help you see things you weren’t able to see.”

Before Chaltu entered the University of Minnesota, she feared being overwhelmed by the transition—a huge campus, classes in the hundreds, professors she’d never know personally, etc. In her sophomore year she received the UGO! Scholarship, which paid for tuition, books, bus pass, and some other expenses. She recalls that, “With the financial assistance also came a support system in the form of membership and a brand new laptop! I felt like I had won the lottery. In the age when laptops have become an essential part of a student’s life it made my life so easy … I could be anywhere and still do my work. And that was important to me.”

Chaltu’s anxiety about anonymity on campus did not materialize. Instead, she found that classes were small and taught by professors who had time for students. She felt comfortable at the U and comfortable developing her own learning style. “Through this program I met exceptional individuals who wanted nothing but the best for me and I continue to be humbled by their belief in me.”

She calls herself “a practical learner—I need to try something not read about it. In the spring of my first year, with the help of my adviser, I took a course, ‘Intimate Relations’ in Family Social Sciences, and I loved it—the teacher, the content, the real-life examples I could think about and use immediately.” She found the connection between what she wanted to do with her life and an academic major that could help her get there. She graduated from the University of Minnesota in 2010 and just finished her first year as a master’s student in Social Work.

“Think it is a tremendous opportunity to be educated and to use education for the greater good,” Chaltu said. “Not only am
PsTL Inspires Giving: John and Nancy Peyton

The John and Nancy Peyton Scholarship endows funds for a promising first-generation student whose family lacks the financial resources to afford college. Nancy, an artist in her spare time, whose own family could not afford to send her to college, believes that the scholarship is a creative way she and husband John can offer something that matters. They believe that a person can change his or her life through education. As Nancy says, “We want others to love to learn how to learn, and a college education can give someone confidence in their own creative abilities no matter what they decide to do in life.” Nancy has found fulfillment in community and artistic endeavors, being “authentic to myself, relaxed, and taking life in to enjoy, no matter what hardships or tragedies come my way.”

John graduated from the University of Minnesota, went into the Coast Guard Reserves, spent two years at Bemis Corporation, and then entered the investment business. After a long run at one of the Twin Cities’ major investment companies, RBC Dain, he and three partners took the entrepreneurial step of joining the Wilke/Thompson group, now Riverbridge Partners, to form the private client, wealth management division of the firm. Riverbridge has been a trusted investment manager for institutions and high net worth individuals since 1987. Today, in addition to managing clients’ portfolios, John and his team assist clients in planning for today and for the future.

His University of Minnesota connections remain solid. Many Riverbridge people are University graduates, and many of the interns are Carlson School students. John believes in “the U and the Midwest culture and attitude, which shows humility in its team-oriented approach and cherishes good relationships and a positive work ethic.” Without doubt, John felt that his time at the University of Minnesota gave him focus and friendships that survive today.

Aside from the ability to give when you have enjoyed the fruits of life and career, John expressed that “giving is a win-win situation and when times are tough, as in the recent fiscal crises, that is the time to step up and help out. That makes us trample our fears and come out ahead.”

What has been the secret to the Peytons’ success? In a word, “networking,” which John believes is the key to just about any business. “Also, you have to genuinely like people and take an interest in them.”

John Peyton’s advice for students entering careers: “Find something you really think you are going to enjoy and you will succeed at it.” Nancy adds, “Fulfillment comes from this spark of creativity in living what you love to do. Broaden your world, get connected, be who you were meant to be.” Good advice.

If you are interested in talking about setting up a scholarship or other gift, please contact the development office at 612-625-1310.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM SPRING 2011: PsTL RESEARCH SERIES

February 10, 2011: “The Immigrant Student Comes to College: A Student Affairs Perspective,” presented by Michael Stebleton (assistant professor, PsTL), Cathrine Wambach (associate professor, PsTL), and Ron Huesman (Institutional Research)

March 10, 2011: “Using Computers as Personal Problem-Solving Coaches in Physics,” presented by Leon Hsu (associate professor, PsTL) and Anne Loyle (MA student, PsTL)
PsTL faculty members, families, and colleagues congratulated the first graduating class for the Post-baccalaureate Certificate in Innovations in Undergraduate Multicultural Teaching and Learning on May 11. No one could have been happier than these six students as they received their certificates and basked in the limelight of becoming the “first community” to flourish—after a year of hard work.

The Certificate program is designed to develop experts in instructional and administrative practices, foundations for academic success, and skill enhancement that meet the educational needs of diverse populations.

Five Certificate grads have enrolled in the PsTL Master of Arts in Multicultural College Teaching and Learning program. Terrance (Terry) Paape will make this his second master’s degree (currently he is completing one in Educational Policy and Administration), noting how meaningful the Certificate experience was because it “gave me a chance to engage with what it really means to teach multiculturalism and social justice.” Simone Gbolo said that her “… experience in the program has been a wonderful combination of academics, application to practice, and has offered the opportunity to cultivate wonderful relationships with other practitioners in education. … My experiences have made my work that much more meaningful!” Anne Loyle-Langholz felt that the Certificate program “helped me identify and validate some of the things that I was doing in my past teaching experiences. It has offered me new perspectives on student learning and strategies that can be employed in guiding students in postsecondary education.” Anise McDowell is looking ahead to the master’s program as she expands her professional responsibilities to “better teach and serve students using the principles of universal design, multicultural education, and social justice education.” Another new MA student, Alison Link, was enthusiastic, saying, “It’s been an incredibly rich, welcoming environment for me—particularly within such a large university. At any given department event, there seems to be just as many professors hanging around as graduate students! The PsTL Certificate has connected me with work and research experiences in one of my newfound areas of interest—academic technology.”

Having questioned issues of access in higher education here and abroad, Alison says she is “excited to explore the interplay between international education and multiculturalism on my home campus.”

The group’s satisfaction with the program is best expressed by grad Douglas Haltinner, who wrote about “… so many great students, faculty, and staff who care deeply about providing the best education to the world.”

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**FAREWELL TO KAREN MIKSCH AS GRAD PROGRAM DIRECTOR**

With gratitude and appreciation, the PsTL family says thank you to Karen Miksch for her leadership and imagination in launching the PsTL graduate program. Karen will enjoy a well-earned sabbatical over the academic year 2011–2012. This fall graduate program director duties will be assumed by Jeanne Higbee. All of us at PsTL are looking forward to Jeanne’s leadership and to welcoming a large and diverse population of graduate students who want to make a difference in teaching and learning.
PsTL’S RESEARCH SERIES: Dr. Shaun Harper

On April 28, the PsTL Research Series culminated with a thought-provoking talk by Professor Shaun Harper from the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Harper is on the faculty of the Graduate School of Education and holds an appointment in the Center for Africana Studies and Gender Studies. His research examines racism and gender disparities in American higher education, Black male college access and achievement, and college student engagement. He is one of the leading thinkers on Critical Race Theory (CRT) and has published widely on this subject.

Dr. Harper addressed a full house of students, faculty, and community members during his talk, “Responding to the Realities of Race at the University of Minnesota.” At the University of Minnesota as elsewhere on many college campuses, he noted that Blacks are under-represented as students, faculty, and administrators yet these schools espouse diversity and multiculturalism. Although diversity appears prominently in recruitment literature, in reality many schools do not “walk the talk.”

In our racially diverse democracy, he said, race is “minoritized” and institutions of education still have a ways to go. He commented that the words “racism” and “racist” are seldom used in the academic literature; instead; many other euphemisms appear, further obscuring the issues of race and racism in higher education.

He called for teachers to develop dialogues that address and reflect racial matters honestly in one’s own place and in one’s own context.

Dr. Harper’s talk riveted everyone in the room and many different perspectives were shared. Discussion was animated and energetic—especially covering how teachers need to engage in a forthright dialogue with students.

Dr. Harper is “a highly productive, nationally recognized tenured professor … [with an] active research agenda.” In addition to teaching, he presents at conferences, educational groups, and policy forums; conducts research; writes articles, books, monographs, and reports; serves on boards; consults with various organizations and commissions; receives awards; and enjoys many academic collaborations. One of his most recent books is *Racial and Ethnic Diversity in Higher Education*, edited with Sylvia Hurtado (Boston, MA: Pearson, 2011).
A Learning Community can be an unbelievably rewarding experience for both students and instructors. By looking at important ideas—in our case, issues related to civil rights—through the lenses of law and literature, students hone their critical thinking skills using multiple perspectives, an opportunity not always available in one course. As an instructor, the collaborative work of selecting texts, designing assignments, and providing meaningful intersections between the two courses has enriched my teaching immeasurably. In addition, with respect to my own discipline, my previously narrow view of the law and how it works has expanded in ways that I never would have expected. I’m learning along with my students, which in turn makes me a more effective instructor.

Gary Peter, Senior Teaching Specialist

Deep, meaningful dialogue across differences is invaluable. My best classes leave me thinking in ways that I have not considered before and asking new questions. By engaging in collaborative inquiry with my students, including and considering the diversity of their ideas, I have opportunities to extend my own multicultural awareness. This is important because oftentimes we do not have many opportunities to engage in deep, respectful discussions of complex social problems in the company of people who may have profoundly different political, social, cultural, or religious values than we do. These opportunities do present themselves in my classroom, and supporting these intentional discussions is a critical part of higher education.

Tabitha Grier-Reed, Associate Professor

I enjoy challenging my students to think deeper and often differently about things they don’t normally think they should think about deeper or differently. The diversity of my classrooms pushes me to question if my depth is deep enough or if my thoughts of what’s different are different enough for all those who I’m pushing to think. I’m still learning how to go deeper and think differently, but I’m enjoying the process. Fortunately, in PsTL I’m rewarded for learning how to get better at something that I already enjoy doing—exploring different depths.

Na’im Madyun, Assistant Professor

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