

UNIVERSITY OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
MATH FACULTY PEDAGOGICAL TRAINING (2nd Workshop)
(June 13-27, 2006, 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM daily)
Sponsored by Title III Office of the University
Faculty Trainers: Drs. Daryao Khatri, Anne Hughes and Prof. Brenda Brown

TRAINING EVALUATIONS FROM A FIVE-DAY TRAINING SESSION

The following are unedited (typos have been corrected) comments from different emails that were sent to Title III, UDC Officer. This workshop was conducted for five full-days (June 13-27, 2006) from 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM. Three faculty members, who became GAP trainers, from the department of mathematics participated in this workshop voluntarily.

Comments of professor # 1

I attended the workshop for mathematics faculty given by Professor Brown, Dr. Khatri, and Dr. Hughes. I found it to be very valuable and I have made comments below. June 27, 06

I have attended quite a few workshops on improving student learning and “how to be an effective teacher”. I found most of these workshops to be boring, ineffective and a waste of time. Too often there was a focus on theory and pedagogy with no concrete examples.

I found the workshop presented by Dr. Khatri and Dr. Hughes to be a very valuable learning experience. The techniques were presented in a very clear and orderly manner and without unnecessary education jargon. Even the ideas and techniques I had already been using in my class were presented in an innovative way so as not to seem redundant or boring. In fact, the techniques which were discussed were actually used to present the very ideas of the workshop. Talk about tools you can use!

I would recommend that Dr. Khatri and Dr. Hughes prepare various versions of this workshop: week-long version; a two day version (e.g. Saturday, Sunday); etc. and even possibly tailor the workshop to the needs of a particular department. This would allow more faculty to participate, and possibly generate greater interest.

There were many important ideas that I received from this workshop; but the most valuable one by far was “Pruning the Course to Its Essentials”. Coming from the typical mathematics/the sciences training, I’m used to lots of exercises; difficult problems that the professor did not explain, but we were somehow supposed to know how to solve; etc. I felt obligated to teach that way! And for what?! To discourage students who already might have deficient backgrounds or other demands on their self-esteem?! I realized it’s OK to assign only five or ten problems as homework, and to actually give them the exam to practice on, not a sample exam but the actual exam! I have done this for the summer course I’m teaching. At first, I actually felt a little guilty, like I had done something wrong. But then I thought about it-- when I was in graduate school it was common knowledge that most, if not all, of the qualifying exams were on file in the department and sometimes you could even take a course from the very professor who

was going to prepare a particular exam. So giving the students the exam ahead of time and allowing them to work on it is not cheating or short changing the students. NO! Students are cheated when I don't do my job as a professor and present the material they need to solve the problems.

Giving students fewer exercises and a copy of the exam gives them a clear, practical and achievable goal; and **they actually learn the material!**

This method is much more effective, and I plan to continue using it.

Comments of professor # 2

I am in the Mathematics Department Of The University of the District of Columbia. I have had 36 years of teaching experience .I have taught in different universities in America and Africa. I have been very effective as a teacher. As a matter of fact I am "Who is who in American Teachers". However I have benefited immensely from this workshop.

I am learning for the first time pedagogical terms such as anchoring, accelerating slowly, and so forth. Of course I have been using some of the techniques without knowing their names. I have been guilty of giving a lot of assignments to my students in the past. Above all I have gained a lot of knowledge in computer techniques. The use of the spreadsheet in excel and other software usage.

I recommend that faculty members should be encouraged to attend this important workshop on how to improve retention at UDC.

Comments of professor # 3

This is an evaluation on the mini-workshop on student retention conducted by Dr. Anne Hughes and Dr. Daryao Khatri from 13 June 2006 to 27 June 2006.

The workshop was very useful and conducted in a constructive, collegial manner.

Many of the techniques, which were discussed, are quite similar to the teaching techniques I have adopted in more than 30 years teaching at the University level, including at UDC, George Washington, and American Universities as well as many professional institutes.

I have also lectured abroad at more than a dozen foreign universities and professional institutions and receive accolades for teaching with a modified Socratic method, using

- 1) Anchors or "rapture" - that is gaining and holding student attention
- 2) Dedication of student focus - for example, I do not allow students to take notes while I am demonstrating a procedure on the board or with the symposium or demonstrationbut, after completing the presentation, I allow students all the necessary time to copy the notes.....
- 3) following the presentation, I check the students' notes to be sure they have captured them accurately, then I have the students do a follow-up problem to be sure they understand the concepts.

4) I encourage the students to interact (but not interrupt) in the course of the lectures.....

5) Students generally seem to enjoy the class which is taught with humorand the students do appreciate the humor which I bring to the classroom.....

In the mini - workshop, it has been really useful to hear the experiences of the institute faculty as well as that of the fellow faculty members participating in the institute. It leaves me with a good feeling about the current efforts to improve pedagogy.

Comments from Evaluative Instrument

- I give more and more thought to the idea of using name cards, posted on each student's desk.
- Good to see faculty engage in learning of pedagogy.
- Good to have reinforcement of appropriate pedagogical techniques—which certainly vary from “standard” pedagogy.
- Techniques with Excel-many I've used, but not always often—so it is good to review.