



Minnesota State College Faculty

The GREEN SHEET

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The art of becoming a master online instructor

There is no question that online learning is in high demand. Students like the flexibility of learning that allows them to work full-time and raise their families. Increasingly, instructors in the MnSCU system will be asked to teach online.

In order to maintain the quality of instruction and attention to students that we value in the community and technical college system, we need to consider carefully how online instruction differs from on-campus instruction, what training we need to become proficient in online instruction, and what class sizes we can support based on the assessment methods we use.

Some characteristics of instructors transcend teaching methods. Competent instructors need to be skilled in their subjects, in course planning and organization, in verbal and nonverbal presentation skills, in working with colleagues, in the use of effective questioning strategies, and in involving students in discussion and group work.

Web-based instruction can differ from traditional

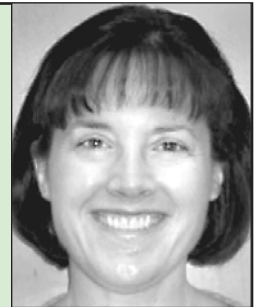
classroom instruction in the following ways: 1) there is often a feeling of greater equality and access between students and instructors; 2) written instructions need to be very explicit; 3) workloads frequently increase for online instructors; 4) deeper levels of thinking are possible in online discussions when students have time to read and respond thoughtfully to each other; and 5) online identities emerge from relative anonymity as students share discussion and group work.

Skills that are essential for online instructors to meet their students' needs are technological

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By Sara Hoffman

**Technology &
E-Learning Committee
Chair**



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Technological skills for high-quality online instruction include being able to 1) evaluate and effectively use online information; 2) use the computer effectively; 3) access information easily from the Internet; 4) analyze, evaluate, and produce presentations using a variety of media; and 5) keep up to date with existing and emerging learning technologies to enhance learning and student performance.

Online instructors cannot rely on spontaneity for effective instruction. Their administrative skills help students to plan ahead by referring to a course syllabus with clearly defined content goals, assignments, due dates, and resources; to find answers to com-

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Becoming a master online instructor

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monly asked questions; and to use help desks instead of the instructor for technological problems. Instructors need to have organizational skills to orient students to the online course, schedule student work and set deadlines, give adequate and timely feedback, develop and present materials that supplement the text, and help students pace themselves throughout a term.

The inability to see the body language of the instructor and classmates during online instruction makes it critical for instructors to have exceptional interpersonal skills to help students feel connected to each other and to the instructor. Instructors need to convey enthusiasm, tolerance, flexibility, sincerity, responsiveness, and a sense of humor through their written communication. Their ability to facilitate student learning rather than to directly deliver instruction helps students to use students' course references, technical support, and web-based resources.

Feedback through email communication and course announcements is similar to having a private tutor. Instructors often write more extensive feedback on the computer than they would longhand.

Without regular comments, suggestions, and encouragement from instructors to personalize instruction, students may quickly lose interest in a course. Instructor feedback needs to stimulate students, to share insight, to encourage students to elaborate on their responses, and to suggest alternative perspectives.

As online instructors build relationships with their students, they need to be innovative, experimental, and very positive to manage details that are often out of their control, such as faulty Internet connections, web-sites that are temporarily out of service, course management system problems, viruses, technology problems with student computers, and rapid changes in technology and media products.

The Reality of Teaching Online

What happens if your administrator asks you to teach online before you feel proficient to be an online instructor? The college will need to provide you with appropriate training in online instruction.

The University of Wisconsin has a Distance Education Professional Development program that covers distance teaching, learning, technology, instructional design, evaluation, learner support, and management (<http://www.uwex.edu/disted/depd>). The core courses of this continuing education certificate program are consistent with the Teacher Education Sequence (TES) required of Minnesota technical college instructors. This sequence may be required of community college instructors as well when the new policy on credentialing takes effect.

It would make sense to have parallel tracks of teacher education courses in online and campus-based instruction. The course sequence should emphasize: 1) facilitating online learning through presentation of information; directing structured learning experiences, and managing group discussions and processes; 2) course design and development to determine course content, instruction, and

presentation methods; 3) evaluation and analysis to identify and improve student performance; and 4) selection of the most suitable kind of technology to support learners' needs such as software, hardware, support desk help, and the advantages of various types of media.

"Ah," you ask, "but what about class size?" There are no standards for on-campus or online course class size except the general practice of larger lecture classes, slightly smaller lecture/lab courses, and even smaller internship courses. The amount of individual interaction required between instructors and students is related to lower class size, as is the amount of time required to grade students' work.

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Plan ahead for this year's Delegate Assembly

The MSCF annual Delegate Assembly is scheduled for April 15, 2005, at the Holiday Inn North in Arden Hills. The Assembly is composed of the Executive Committee, the members of the Board of Directors, and delegates elected from each chapter according to the following proportions:

Members of Chapter	Number of Delegates*
1-20	1
21-40	2
41-60	3
61-80	4
81-100	5
(etc.)	(etc.)

*in addition to Board Member

Please select your delegates as soon as possible. No later than March 31, delegates must notify their supervisor that they will be absent on Friday, April 15, to attend the Delegate Assembly (Article 9, Section 8 of the Employment Contract).

The Delegate Assembly provides a wonderful learning experience for new faculty by allowing them to witness the deep involvement of their union in a wide array of areas and issues. Encourage new faculty to be representatives.

The Delegate Assembly has authority in the following areas:

- to propose new policies to the Board of Directors;
- to review the existing policies of the organization and advise the Board of Directors thereon;
- to consider and recommend new business items as proposed by chapters, the Board of Directors, the Executive Committee or individual members;
- to recommend amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws to the Board of Directors. Proposals for amendments shall be submitted to each chapter thirty (30) days prior to the Delegate Assembly or

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may be introduced at the Delegate Assembly with agreement of two-thirds (2/3) of the delegates;

- to consider and establish resolutions for the organization.

Reminder:

All resolutions shall be submitted to the MSCF office for distribution thirty (30) days prior to convening of the Delegate Assembly in order to be introduced at that Delegate Assembly meeting. Resolutions which have not been submitted to the MSCF office by March 10, 2005, can be introduced with the agreement of two-thirds (2/3) of the delegates.

Further information on the Delegate Assembly will be sent to chapter presidents and Board members in March.

Delegate Assembly important dates:

March 10: Deadline for submitting resolutions for distribution prior to the meeting.

March 31: Last day for delegates to notify their supervisor that they will be absent on April 15.

Hiring practices, layoff notices are contract concerns in March

March and the official end of winter are upon us. Two contractual pieces come into play in March: the hiring practices language and the application of it to each college and to the two-year colleges statewide and the reality of layoff notices. It is also near the deadline for selecting layoff benefits and for the finalization of exercising summer rotation rights.

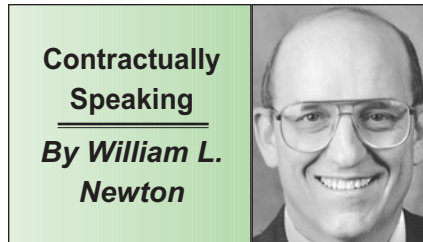
Hiring Practices

The Office of the Chancellor will compile and present documentation to the MSCF of all bargaining unit work for this academic year. The rosters of all unlimited full-time faculty will be verified by the parties. These rosters will be made up of all UFT faculty including those who are on an unpaid leave of absence, on unlimited special status, and on phased retirement.

The sixty percent (60%) of all bargaining unit work minimum to be done by unlimited full-time faculty at each college will be calculated as well as the seventy percent (70%) system-wide to determine which colleges are out of compliance. The colleges will be informed of how many unlimited full-time positions to post and hire by fall semester 2005.

Layoff

Faculty members who are on notice of layoff should be carefully following the posting of positions that are generated out of the Office



of the Chancellor every Monday (except when Monday is a holiday). When such a faculty member wants to claim a vacant position, the claim must be made in writing to the Office of the Chancellor and to the Human Resources Director at the college of the posted vacancy during the posting period.

Faculty members should also assist those who are already on the recall or claiming list from previous years. If you know of a position that someone on layoff is qualified to claim, give him/her a call to make sure he/she is aware of the posting.

April 1 is the deadline for faculty from the former UTCE organization who are on notice of layoff to make a selection of layoff benefits. If a selection is not made in writing, the default is Option A. Option A is to be on the recall/layoff list for four years and to be provided with retraining dollars, sick leave liquidation, and one year of employer paid insurance benefits.

Option B, however, is a choice

to sever all relationships with the college, to be provided with \$12,000, sick leave liquidation, and one year of employer paid insurance benefits. Please contact your field staff representative for assistance in this process.

Summer Rotation

The summer session offerings at each college should be in the final planning stages. Faculty members should be aware of the rotation lists and the order of choices and

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should be exercising those rights. If additional offerings are added after the choices have been made, the MSCF and MnSCU have reached an agreement on how these courses will be offered to faculty on the rotation lists.

If courses are added during spring semester but after rotation rights have been exercised, the college must go back to the person at the top of the rotation list even if the person is fully loaded. Courses added after the end of spring semester but prior to the beginning

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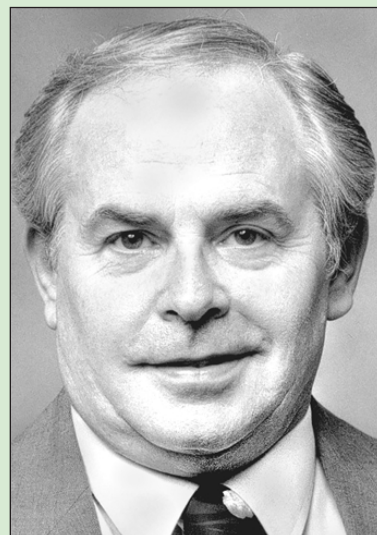
'Thanks, Joe'

Stafki retires from field staff

Joe Stafki, staff representative for MSCF, retired on Feb. 28, 2005, after a long career as an inspector for the Minnesota Board of Electricity, an instructor at Wadena Area Vocational Technical Institute, a Minnesota Federation of Teachers (MFT) staffer, and a UTCE field staff representative. Stafki was instrumental in the formation of the first MFT/MEA merged higher education union in the nation and also in the creation of the former UTCE. In the spring of 2001 when UTCE merged with MCCFA to form MSCF, Stafki became one of three staff representatives for our union.

Stafki plans to spend more time with his wife, seven adult sons and one daughter, and 24 grandchildren. In speaking about retirement Stafki said, "I've advised people to remember that they control only one part of retirement – when it starts." Stafki has decided to heed his own advice and do the things he wants to do while he's still young enough to do them.

Thanks for your years of service, Joe. We wish you many happy and fulfilling years of retirement. We'll miss you.



Joe Stafki

Motions passed

•MSCF Board of Directors •December 10–11, 2004

1. The MSCF Board of Directors approves the 2005 MSCF Legislative Goals as submitted.
2. The MSCF Board of Directors adopts the following policy for meal reimbursement: "It shall be the policy of the Minnesota State College Faculty to reimburse reasonable meal expenses. Original receipts shall be submitted with a reimbursement form for all meals over \$10. Meals \$10 or less may be reimbursed without receipts."
3. The MSCF Board of Directors adopts the following policy for a new category of membership: "It shall be the policy of the Minnesota State College Faculty that a MSCF member who was active and is no longer employed may, upon payment of full dues, retain a reserve status for as long as the member holds claiming rights. Members in reserve status shall not be eligible to vote or hold office."
4. The MSCF Board of Directors hereby verifies the members of the Board of Directors, or their replacements, as the duly elected MSCF representatives to the Education Minnesota Representative Convention.
5. The MSCF Board of Directors directs that any proposed new College Faculty Credentialing Policy and Procedure be brought before the full membership for a vote to proceed or not.

Faculty Rights Committee makes recommendations

At its meeting on February 11–12, 2005, the MSCF Faculty Rights Committee made the following recommendations to the MSCF Negotiations Team and Executive Committee:

1. We, the Faculty Rights Committee, recommend that based on the information gathered from regional meetings, further in-depth research is critical prior to any bargaining effort to address workload adjustments for the former UTCE faculty members.
2. We, the Faculty Rights Committee, recommend that based on the information gathered from regional meetings, the definition article of the master agreement include a definition of student advising constructed in a manner that would prohibit the administration from making assignments without providing additional compensation.
3. We, the Faculty Rights Committee, recommend that each chapter conduct extensive contract training/education for all new faculty.

Course Redesign Project

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- What will we do with the displaced instructors? We don't have a bunch of upper division courses to reassign them to.
- Where will the upfront investment for instructor time for redesign, software, equipment, room remodeling, and other infrastructure come from?

These and other questions will be explored over the next months as the Office of the Chancellor staff follow the Trustees' directive to get going on this. It looks like a few pilot projects will be authorized at MnSCU colleges and universities at this time, but you should be aware of the ardor with which the Trustees' committee has embraced this course redesign proposal. I believe they will find money from somewhere to fund the pilots, and that their interest will not wane.

MSCF will send four faculty members to a workshop in March at which they will talk with instructors from the original project institutions. We will have those four members talk with our Board of Directors and Delegates in April and inform members more broadly about the project later in the spring.

For now, you might want to check out these websites for more information. At <http://center.rpi.edu> you will find a quarterly newsletter from the Center for Academic Transformation. The newsletter will lead you

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to sites with data and descriptions of the project and its forms.

For a blueprint of Carol Twigg's presentation to the Trustees, go to <http://www.ctl.mnscu.edu/docs/2004-MNSCU-CarolTwigg.htm>.

In addition, your chapter's representative to our Board of Directors has material on this project which we passed out at the February meeting.

We should keep in mind that this redesign does not match up with technical courses nor with most of our non-introductory courses (not enough sections), but it is likely to be a factor at our larger colleges.

Online teaching: Class size and assessment

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When instructors teach 15 credits per semester, with two hours of work outside of class for every hour in class, there are approximately 10 hours per week to prepare for classes and 20 hours for grading and student interaction. For lecture classes with no lab assistant, five sections of 40 students each would be 200 students per semester for an instructor. This gives the instructor about six minutes per student every week for interaction, assessment, and feedback. Assessment would have to be limited to multiple-choice quizzes that can be scanned or less frequent assignments that require more grading time.

Lecture/lab classes with 25 students per section and 15 hours for class preparation each week would allow slightly more than 14 minutes per student every week. Online instruction fits this scenario in that class preparation could easily be 15 hours per week to post quizzes, discussion board topics, announcements, assignment instructions, study aids, and web links. Assessment methods might include automatically graded quizzes as well as website summaries, responses to discussion items posted by other learners, and responses to the instructor's email messages that elicit higher levels of critical thinking.

think critically and make judgments.

Based on the learning goals and assessment methods and a baseline weekly workload of about

“In a world where people seem to be increasingly isolated, online instruction provides a surprisingly intimate platform...”

As instructors design online courses, they can determine whether they want to assess students' ability to communicate, design and create, access and manage information, develop themselves (i.e., through journals or portfolios), perform procedures or demonstrate techniques, solve problems and develop plans, or

45 hours, instructors can determine how many students they can teach with integrity and quality for each course. If higher class sizes are requested by a college administration, assessment methods need to be changed accordingly. Without that adjustment, instructors will be stretched too thin to give students the instruction they deserve.

Contractually speaking

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of summer session will not be subject to rotation. However, the college will make a good faith effort to contact those faculty members on the list who are not fully loaded and offer the available work to them.

Remember that to exercise your contractual rights to the fullest requires that you actually know what they are. Take the time to read the Contract.

When students receive regular feedback and encouragement, we tap into their need to feel connected, acknowledged, and stimulated. In a world where people seem to be increasingly isolated, online instruction provides a surprisingly intimate platform for students to work toward goals they may have thought were out of their reach. And building bridges to dreams, I think, is what we do best.

MSCF

An affiliate of Education Minnesota

The GREEN SHEET

The Green Sheet is published five or six times a year by the Minnesota State College Faculty (MSCF). Chief editor is MSCF Liberal Arts Vice President JoAnn Roche, with MSCF officers, staff, and faculty contributing.

Letters to the Editor and requests for information should be addressed to the MSCF office, 55 Sherburne Ave., St. Paul, Minnesota 55103. Telephone toll free: 1-800-377-7783; or 651-767-1262 in the Minneapolis-St. Paul local calling area.



An affiliate of the National Education Association
and American Federation of Teachers

Course Redesign Project: Another fad?

MnSCU and some of our colleges are abuzz with talk of Carol Twigg and the Course Redesign Project. This initiative to apply technology more thoroughly to selected college classrooms is new to Minnesota but has been tried and studied for a few years at some 30 institutions of higher education across the country.

At the January meeting of the MnSCU Board of Trustees' Education Policy Committee, Dr. Carol Twigg addressed the members about a project her institute, the Center for Academic Transformation, has been conducting. With federal grant money, Twigg recruited and helped 30 higher education institutions (only two of them are two-year colleges) to experiment with ways to increase student learning and to save money by applying technology very intensively to selected, multi-section courses. The courses selected were all introductory, large-enrollment courses with many sections that could be rolled together into much larger sections.

Another fad? We have all seen the fads in higher education come and go (see Robert Birnbaum's 2000 work, *Management Fads in Higher Education*), but this one stands apart, I sense, because it has data to back it up. While most fads have been temporarily accepted or endorsed because they just seemed so right to administrators zealous to build a resume, this project has student learning and financial data, pre- and post-courses.

Though there are



important variations and styles within this idea, the basic recipe for the project is this. Take a multi-section introductory course with a traditional class size of 30 and roll four sections together to make a class size of 120. Assign one instructor. Apply technology everywhere you possibly can in the course, from registration to student-teacher communication to testing and assessment/grading. Be creative here, this is where a lot of the savings are.

Next, hire someone, a graduate student, a former student in the course, a classified staff member, or some such, and assign him/her to the course along with the instructor. It will be the responsibility of this person to handle all student matters associated with the course with the exception of content questions.

“We have all seen the fads in higher education come and go... but this one stands apart, I sense, because it has data to back it up.”

That is, s/he will free up the instructor to concentrate on student learning and student interaction about course content, rather than handling questions about lost homework, what was missed yesterday when the car would not start, etc.

If you are new to this course redesign scheme, run a control section(s) or pre-test to establish that student learning in the redesigned course at least matches student learning before the redesign. Proponents claim, and some data shows, that careful redesign can enhance student learning.

As for the instructors displaced by the combining of sections, just have them teach upper division or more specific courses, something they have always wanted to do anyway. In those courses, or in the sections you rolled together, you likely had some part-time instructors. Terrific! Just let them go and harvest the saved dollars for reinvestment. Sounds pretty good, doesn't it?

Well, we think there are some questions to be answered as this plan builds momentum in Minnesota.

- The project institutions, almost without exception, were selective-enrollment colleges and universities. How will the students in our colleges handle this type of learning environment? You know — the students with marginal scores on the placement test, the students with minimal English language skills, and the students who have never worked with a computer.

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