Annual Teaching and Learning

Report 2014:

Moving the needle towards success

UNIVERSITY OF THE
FREE STATE
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE
VRYSTAAT
YUNIVESITHI YA
FREISTATA

UFS·UV
**CENTRE FOR TEACHING
AND LEARNING (CTL)
ONDERRIG-EN-LEERSENTRUM
(OLS)**

Mission:

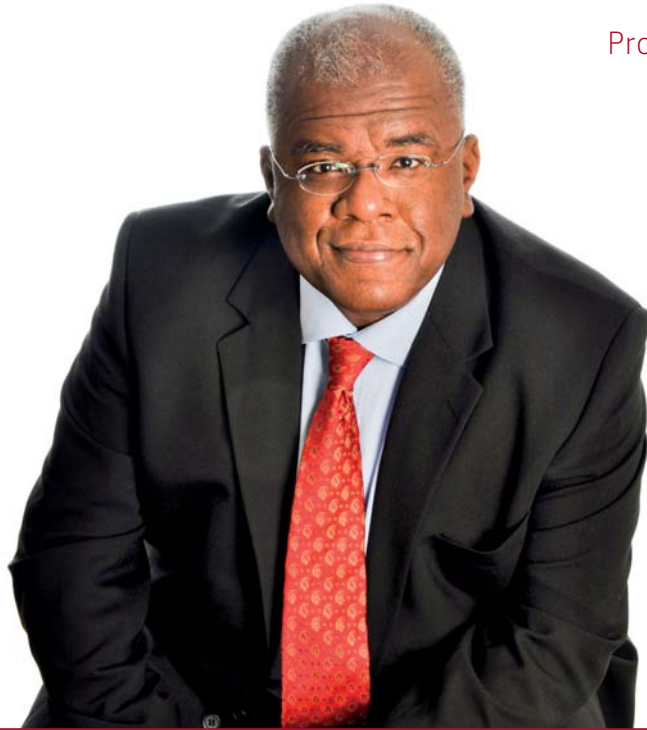Scholarship driven advancement, and leadership of innovation and excellence in teaching and learning.

CENTRE FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

REPORT 2014

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Message from the Rector

Prof Jonathan Jansen

I have visited scores of Centres for Teaching and Learning (CTL) at leading higher education institutions around the world and I can truly say that the CTL of the University of the Free State is one of the most impressive in terms of design, content and imagination.

This is in large part a consequence of extraordinary leadership in the Centre and its reputation for attracting among the smartest students and young academics into this high-energy environment. Appropriately located at one of the entrances to the Main Campus Library, our CTL combines considerable experience in the field with an acute awareness of international innovations in technologies of teaching, learning and assessment. This Annual Report captures some of the many proud achievements of the CTL at our university.

Centres for Teaching and Learning can easily become one-dimensional in its focus on improving students' access to knowledge in all its various forms (disciplinary, academic and organisational) and preparing academic teachers for the complexity and uniqueness of teaching in higher education. But of course there is much more that can be done in such an innovative space—such as imagining the deployment of new technologies that provide real-time access to knowledge on multimedia platforms that can be accessed from many different physical and virtual points. It means going beyond "overcoming deficits" from the school system and raising the knowledge bar, such as in our core curriculum, to engage students in cross-disciplinary conversations on often difficult questions, such as "how should we deal with our violent past?" It means offering consultancy-based writing opportunities that provide students with competences whose benefits stretch far beyond the demands of their main degrees. All this and more have come to define the work and identity of the Centre for Teaching and Learning.

The criticism often made, and rightly so, is that university leadership tends to recognise and reward research at the expense of teaching. Indeed, the impulse of university leaders to optimise state subsidies and to seek short-term reputational gains and improved rankings through research has, without question, downplayed the significance of teaching as the core activity in which all academics engage. Short-sighted leaders often press academics not for inspirational and engaging teaching, but simply for more students to pass and graduate so as to collect the subsidy at the end of the delivery chain. I understand those impulses in austere environments, but this kind of obsession demeans teaching and turns universities into academic factories in which the soul of teaching is lost.

The Centre for Teaching and Learning is my conscience as a university leader, a powerful reminder that at the heart of everything we do is this sacred task of teaching. I am delighted, therefore, the CTL has taken up our call to identify, nurture, recognise, reward and make prominent our outstanding university teachers on an annual basis. However we need to do more than this and document exemplary teaching in a systematic way and then draw out deep theory, research and significance from rich databases for university policies and pedagogies anywhere in the world. That is no doubt the next challenge in the development of CTL's mandate at the University of the Free State.

I wish to thank all our funders, in South Africa and abroad, for your generous financing of the many initiatives of the CTL. Without your funding we would not be able to test new ideas and monitor new plans and projects. You would not fund losing ventures and I hope you are proud of what my colleagues at CTL have achieved not only for one university but for higher education in general. I thank my university lecturers for your devotion to the task of teaching and especially to those who make themselves vulnerable to collegial criticism and engagement for learning through the various activities of the CTL; thank you very much. And then of course to the two giants called Francois, Strydom and Marais, for the powerful and visible testimonies of your leadership in teaching and learning, my sincere and heartfelt thanks.

May all of you as readers of this beautifully compiled report find new ideas, energy and inspiration so that across South Africa, and abroad, we continue to give meaning and substance to what is appropriately called, if not always appreciated, 'the scholarship of teaching and learning.' ■

Message from the CTL Directors

Francois Marais & Francois Strydom

Why should a university regard teaching and learning, and especially the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, as important? – Lee Shulman

In answering Lee Shulman's[1] question, we may point to three broad rationales, also known as the 3Ps, namely:

Professionalism - this relates to the inherent obligations academics and institutions have towards students and other stakeholders and also the opportunities scholarly teaching creates for staff to broaden their own disciplinary expertise as well as the ability to share the knowledge of their discipline with outside stakeholders through innovative teaching and learning.

Pragmatism - this refers to the fact that responsible educators, especially in South Africa, are being challenged to find new ways of facilitating learning through their teaching. This context requires critical self-reflection and continuous improvement to address the challenges of a diverse 21st century classroom.

Policy – scholarly teaching in disciplines is vital to help institutions meet the accountability demands from statutory bodies such as the Council on Higher Education (CHE), the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), and other stakeholders. Scholarly teaching provides evidence to temper the development of "one-size-fits-all" approaches to measuring the impact of teaching and learning practices.

This report entitled *Moving the needle towards success* provides an illustration of a broad range of innovative teaching and learning activities at the University of the Free State. The evidence provided shows that both qualitative and quantitative data needs to be considered in appreciating how these activities and initiatives enhance professionalism, pragmatism, and policy. The Centre for Teaching and Learning is proud of, and excited by, the supportive role it can play in the innovative work done by academics on a daily basis, and to facilitate different ways in which to encourage scholarly sharing of the result of these efforts.

These initiatives would not be possible without the support of institutional leaders and the Teaching Development Grant of the DHET. We would also like to give special recognition to private companies and foundations that continue to invest in innovative teaching and learning projects when institutions do not have the resources.

We hope that you enjoy reading about these activities and initiatives as much as we enjoy being part of them. ◼

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1. Shulman, L. (2000). *FROM MINSK TO PINSK: WHY A SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING?* Presented at the Meeting of the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) campus affiliates, Anaheim, CA.

A new teaching and learning strategy for the UFS

Francois Strydom

"If you do not think about the future, you cannot have one."

John Galsworthy (Nobel Prize winner)

The need to think about the future of teaching and learning at the University of the Free State (UFS) as a research-led institution was a vital driving force in the development of a new teaching and learning strategy. Higher education experts indicate that quality teaching and learning is one of the distinguishing features of international elite research institutions.[1] Others argue that excellence in teaching and excellence in research are mutually reinforcing and that, at great universities, the best researchers are amongst the most brilliant lecturers or mentors because they are at the cutting edge of their disciplines and are able to impart a sense of excitement about their scholarship to students.[2]

The development of a new teaching and learning strategy for the UFS included a robust analysis of the external and internal challenges and pressures facing the institution. External pressures and challenges include the global and national demand for quality teaching and learning that will produce graduates who are able to meet the challenges of the 21st century at local and international level. Within the context of a national higher education environment that demands both a drive towards massification through increased enrolments, and improved throughput rates, quality teaching and learning is an imperative component that will assist the UFS to be more competitive within the cluster of research-focused institutions in South Africa. Internally, success and throughput data emphasise the importance of quality teaching and learning to the

development of a strong graduate pool that will enrol for postgraduate studies, thereby helping the UFS to become a research-led institution. Furthermore, research supports the internationally reported nexus between teaching and learning and research, which contributes to the urgent refocus on teaching and learning to enable the UFS to meet its strategic aims.

The new teaching and learning strategy comprises seven improvement objectives to promote quality teaching and learning and student success in the 21st century. These objectives are informed by an international analysis by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) of 50 initiatives in 29 institutions across the world. All the objectives are mutually reinforcing and intended to facilitate the development of a teaching and learning culture that equips the University to meet its strategic goals. The objectives are as follows:

- Raising awareness of quality teaching and learning;
- Developing excellent teachers;
- Engaging students for success;
- Building an organisation for change and teaching and learning leadership;
- Aligning institutional policies to foster quality teaching and learning;
- Highlighting innovation as a driver for change; and
- Evidence-based change through assessment.

1 Altbach, P. & Salmi, J. (2011). *The Road to Academic Excellence: The Making of World- Class Research Universities*. Washington D.C: The World Bank.
2 Cole, J. (2009). The great American university: its rise to pre-eminence, its indispensable national role, and why it must be protected. New York: Public Affairs.

Efforts by the UFS to address these strategic improvement objectives are also linked to the development of graduate attributes. Graduate attributes can be understood as the qualities, values, attitudes, skills, and understandings that students should have developed by the end of their studies across all qualifications offered at a particular university. These attributes are intended to equip students for future employment and to develop them as critical and responsible citizens, contributing to the social and economic well-being of society.[3] The framework for graduate attributes is adapted from the work of Simon Barrie who developed a two-tier framework.[4] Tier 1 includes "complex interwoven aspects of human ability which are difficult to explicitly teach or assess in traditional university experiences" whereas tier 2 consists of more explicit clusters of personal skills and abilities that can be developed differently in diverse disciplines (see Table 1 and Figure 1).

Table 1: Proposed UFS graduate attributes

Tier 1– Complex interwoven aspects	Tier 2 – More explicit clusters of personal skills and abilities
(1) Scholarship; (2) Active glocal citizens; and (3) Lifelong learning.	(4) Inquiry focused and critical; (5) Academic and professional competence; (6) Effective knowledge worker; and (7) Leaders in communities.

Figure 1 illustrates how tier 2 attributes facilitate the development of tier 1 attributes. As tier 2 attributes are more explicit in nature, it is easier to map or design them in existing curricula and measure them through assessment. The tier 1 attributes of scholarship, active glocal citizens, and lifelong learning are viewed as resulting from the complex interactions between tier 2 attributes throughout an undergraduate programme. Therefore, tier 1 attributes are more difficult to assess directly as they are broader, interwoven aspects of graduate attributes.

The strategy highlights the critical elements necessary for quality teaching and learning that will enable the UFS to align with a fundamental shift towards a focus on student learning. This requires institutions to empower lecturers to develop effective pedagogical skills, which will in turn deliver a greater number of skilled graduates within the ambit of a research-led institution. ■

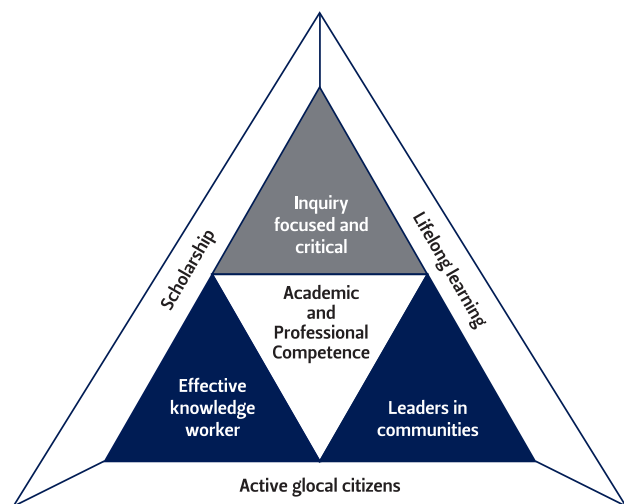**Figure 1: Graphic representation of the proposed UFS graduate attributes**

3 University of the Western Cape. (2011). The Development of Graduate Attributes at UWC. Cape Town, South Africa: University of the Western Cape. Retrieved from http://www.uwc.ac.za/TandL/Pages/Graduate-Attributes.aspx#.UejnlW2BY2Y
4 Barrie, S. C. (2005). Rethinking Generic Graduate Attributes. HERDSA News, 27(1), 1–6

ACCESS
WITH
SUCCESS

Innovation in access:
25 years of experience in access programmes

Francois Marais & Gert Hanekom

The work within the Access and Success focus area is aimed at exploring new approaches to students' university access. The focus is not only on creating access opportunities for students, but also on ways to succeed within the university environment.

Introduction

We are driven to create new initiatives for student success, as well as to offer students support to become independent thinkers and scholars throughout their university careers.

There are three main subareas in Access and Success namely: Access Programmes; the Unit for Academic Literacy, which includes the in-house Writing Centre or Write Site for undergraduate academic writing development; and Recognition of Prior Learning.

The UFS Access Programmes

The focus of the Access Programmes subarea is on helping students to gain access to university through the University Preparation Programme (UPP), Extended Degree Programmes, and Open Learning Initiatives.

The UPP began in the Bloemfontein region of the Free State in January 1993, initially named the NEED Programme (Need for Education and Elevation), stemming from preparatory research and development work dating back to 1991. The necessity for the UPP arose from the imbalances in the school system, which resulted in many deserving students not being able to meet the entrance requirements of universities; the so-called technikons of that era; and vocational colleges. Hence, ten Bloemfontein institutions formed a consortium to implement the UPP.

The UPP has evolved from a lecture-based to a resource-based learning curriculum. It was expanded to Bethlehem in 1998, to Kimberley in 1999, to Welkom and Sasolburg in 2000, to Oudtshoorn in 2001, and to the Qwaqwa campus of the UFS in 2003.

Students attend classes on the South Campus of the UFS in Bloemfontein, the Bethlehem Campus of the Maluti FET College, the Welkom Campus of the Goldfields FET College in Welkom, the Sasolburg Campus of the Flavius Mareka FET College in Sasolburg, the Oudtshoorn Campus of the South Cape College, and the Qwaqwa Campus of the UFS.

Over 25 years, **2 598 degrees** have been awarded to students who began their studies in the UPP, including 232 Honours, 33 Masters, and 9 M.B.Ch.B. degrees.

From classroom to helm: the story of Tshegofatso Setilo

A shining example of how the UPP provides long-term outlooks for success is that of Ms Tshegofatso Setilo. She entered the UPP (without which she would not have had the opportunity to access the UFS) in 2005. She completed the programme successfully and went on to graduate with a B.Soc.Sc degree in 2008. In 2010, she obtained her Honours in Sociology. Thereafter, she won an Erasmus Mundus scholarship to study in Poland, where she obtained a Master's degree in Cultural Studies, majoring in Trans-Atlantic studies. When she returned to South Africa and the Free State, she was appointed as UPP Manager on the South Campus of the UFS.

2013 student enrolment and academic results

A total of 988 students enrolled in the UPP in 2013- an increase of 113 enrolments from 2012. The percentages of students enrolled in the different fields of study or courses offered in the UPP in 2013 can be broken down in the following way:
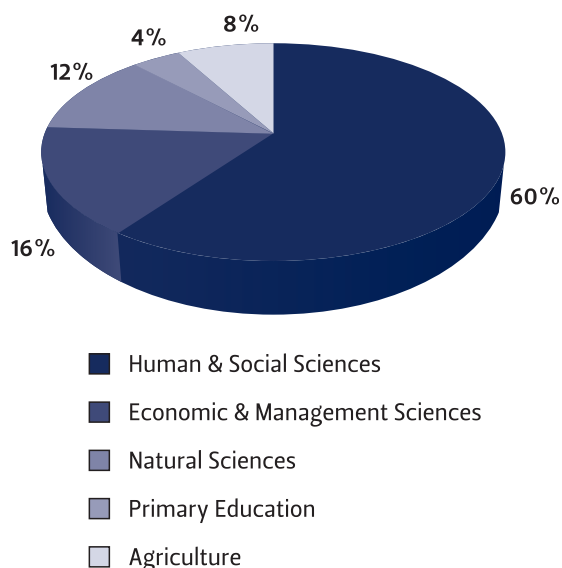
Course Enrolment

- Human & Social Sciences
- Economic & Management Sciences
- Natural Sciences
- Primary Education
- Agriculture

Figure 1: Graphic illustration of enrolment

Raising the bar for success rates

The UPP admits UFS applicants with Admission Point (AP) scores of 20-24 into a one-year programme that offers foundational modules and, depending on the chosen field of study, two or more mainstream first-year modules. Successful students are then admitted into the second study year of Extended Degree studies, determined by their chosen field of study or course in their UPP year. This requires close collaboration with the different faculties involved.

Teaching and Learning methodology makes a difference

The following table provides an overview of the 2013 students' pass rates. Due to the teaching and learning methodology applied at the South Campus, the annual pass rate of UPP students is always above 70%.

2013 Courses	Students Passed	Failed or Suspended Studies	Total Students
Economic & Management Sciences	130	37	167
Human & Social Sciences	484	91	575
Natural & Agricultural Sciences	95	25	120
Primary Education	45	2	47
Agricultural Sciences	64	15	79
Total	**818 (83%)**	**170 (17%)**	**988**

Table 1: Overview of 2013 student performance

Mastering maths: forging ahead

One practical example of innovations in teaching and learning applied in the UPP is course development done by the office of the Teaching and Learning Manager of the faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences.

This development was carried out specifically in courses where the student pass rates were traditionally very low, such as the case of Pre-calculus. In this subject, the course pass rate improved from 34% to 91% in only three years' time, without any changes to the typical student profile or the course content or contact time.

In essence, these developments involved giving the students more responsibility for their own and their peers' learning, while also increasing the quality and availability

of academic support. This was partly achieved by making the teaching process more responsive and implementing strategies and opportunities based on concepts akin to peer tutoring, productive persistence, productive struggle and the notion of giving students a strong start.

Working with funders to provide students with financial support

Five grants geared towards assisting students to achieve greater success either commenced in 2013 or continued from 2012, namely the Dell Foundation grant, the Industrial Development Corporation grant, the Investec grant, the Distell grant, and the Hosken Consolidated Investments grant.

Finding new ways to address the NEET crisis

The Young Adult Learning Programme (YALP) is an example of a drive towards finding new ways to address the NEET crisis (No Employment, Education or Training), which faces more than 3 million working-age South Africans today. The YALP offered a set-curriculum, one-year opportunity to deserving matriculants with AP scores lower than 20 (typically ranging from 15 to 19) to gain access to degree studies. To this end, successful YALP students were permitted to apply for UPP studies, thereafter following the same academic progression pathways as typical UPP students.

A total of 96 students out of 125 applicants registered for the YALP in January 2013, an increase of 39 students from the 2012 cohort.

From January 2014 onwards, the YALP was integrated with the UPP. However, research done in the YALP cohort indicated that these students, who did not meet the traditional criteria for access programme studies, also performed at similar levels in the subjects they shared with UPP students. This research led to a lowering of the admission requirements for UPP applicants.

A different animal for our times: a Higher Certificate that broadens opportunities

The CTL is in the process of developing an application process to replace the current UPP with a SAQA-registered Higher Certificate in Foundation Development and Access.

The main driving force behind this initiative is to provide the typical "access students" who apply for the current UPP with the opportunity to obtain a SAQA-registered qualification that will grant them access to applicable and recommended further Higher Education studies at a variety of institutions across the country. It will also allow them to apply for NSFAS bursaries, which is currently not an option for UPP students. This model proposed for the Higher Certificate has been described as innovative by the DHET and other stakeholders. ∎

Academic Literacy:

Helping students find their voice in a globalised world

Arlys van Wyk & Annette de Wet

The Unit for Academic Literacy

The Unit for Academic Literacy provides specialised literacy courses in collaboration with faculties across the university, using some of the most widely applied approaches to academic literacy development in global higher education. These courses range from full-year subjects to custom interventions requested and co-developed by academic departments. Amongst other materials, the UAL utilises the Academic Encounters materials from Cambridge University to address the academic literacy skills development lacking within students' particular faculties of study.

Frequent conceptual and planning collaborators include William Grabe (Northern Arizona University), Fredricka Stoller (Northern Arizona University), and Donna Brinton (previously from UCLA).

The Academic Literacy Courses

The Unit for Academic Literacy provides seven literacy courses to students across the faculties at the UFS. Students are afforded the opportunity to improve their academic literacy through course content that is relevant to their fields of study. An important component of the syllabus is extensive reading where students are obliged to read 100 pages a week from a fiction text that is pitched at a level that makes reading easy and accessible. A wide variety of texts are available for students to choose from.

The literacy courses are presented by facilitators who are trained and experienced in the pedagogical approaches espoused by the UAL. In addition, the UAL staff presents regular staff development activities to the facilitators that teach within the programmes.

The Academic Facilitation Sessions in the Faculty of Humanities

The Faculty of the Humanities at the UFS established a programme of learning support for first-year students. It is known as the Academic Facilitation Sessions (AFS) programme with the aim of providing scaffolded academic literacy development for students in extended programmes.

The AFS programme promotes the integration of generic and language competencies with disciplinary content. The educational philosophy that guides the teaching-learning in this programme espouses the theories of experiential learning, social constructivism and cooperative learning. An action-research approach with a mixed-methods research design provides a research dimension to track the process and the success of the programme. Quantitative and qualitative data affirm the value of this programme in facilitating access with success. The Unit for Academic Literacy provides the academic literacy content and assists academic staff and facilitators to integrate and scaffold literacy skills into content areas. This is done by means of regular meetings and training sessions with academic staff and facilitators who are responsible for seven content areas in the humanities. ∎

UAL staff

Learning to Write and Writing to Learn:

The Write Site for Academic Success

Laura Drennan & Elmarie Lubbe

The establishment of our academic writing centre, The Write Site (Die Skryfwerf), was the Unit for Academic Literacy's most significant innovation of 2013 and 2014. We started the process of developing this service in 2012 after Prof. Patrick Bizzaro of Indiana University of Pennsylvania assisted UAL staff to develop and administer a writing centre.

Creating a matrix of campus-wide academic literacy support

Working from within the CTL's Unit for Academic Literacy, The Write Site is geared towards addressing the writing needs of undergraduate students across the curriculum. The Write Site works in collaboration with academic departments to help students become autonomous, effective writers of academic discourse in order to form a link between students' academic needs and the writing needs of academe. To date, we have assisted 325 staff members and undergraduate and Honours students.

Services include individual and group consultation sessions and workshops on topics such as academic essay writing, critical reflective writing, report writing, and database searches; bookings can be made online. The walk-in service affords students the opportunity to present written drafts of assignments to trained consultants for comment. Furthermore, the UAL is in the throes of the groundwork for establishing a writing centre on the Qwaqwa campus as well.

The following two graphs present statistics from 2014 showing students' perceptions of the services rendered by The Write Site in response to assignment-specific group workshops.
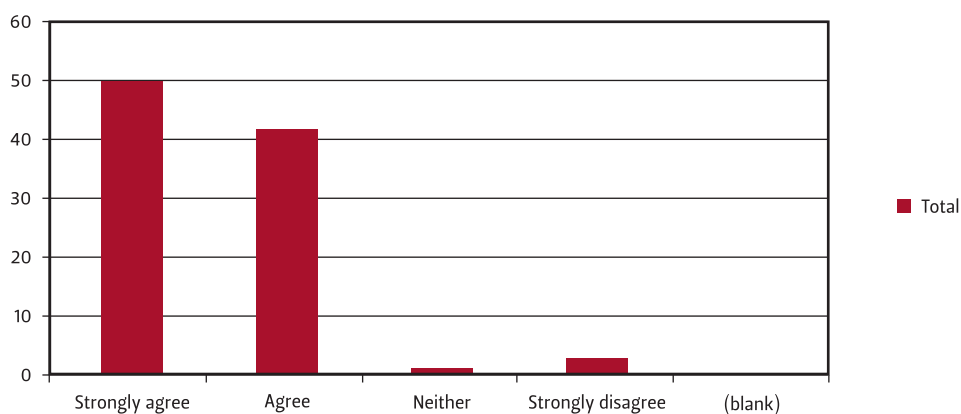

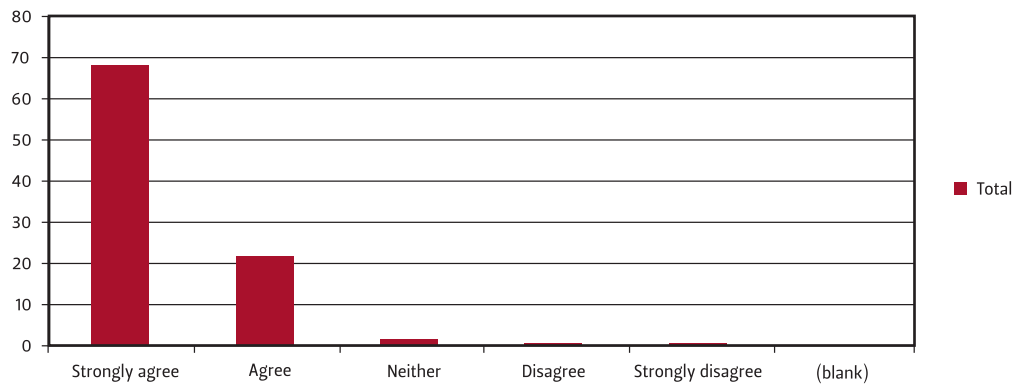**Figure 1: Student perceptions of workshop helpfulness**

Figure 1: Student perceptions of workshop necessity

The following are comments from lecturers who requested the assistance of The Write Site with assignment preparation for their students during the first semester of The Write Site's pilot year:

"I'm finishing marking the last assignment and I just want to say that the students really did so well in the letter to the client. The office memorandum was also better than last year's. Their sentence construction has definitely improved!"

"Baie dankie!! Ek kan sien dat die standaard alreeds heelwat hoër is as vorige jare a.g.v. julle/die ander konsultante se insette." – Translated: "Thanks so much! I can see that the standard [of student writing] has already improved a lot compared to previous years as a result of your consultants' inputs."

"I do believe it already had some effect on the 3rd test as the average jumped from 53% to 63%. Those that I marked, wrote much better answers" ∎

For more information email: writesite@ufs.ac.za

For queries pertaining to the writing needs of English students and staff:

Laura Drennan
drennanl@ufs.ac.za
051 401 2324
CTL office number 370

For queries pertaining to the writing needs of Afrikaans students and staff:

Elmarie Lubbe
lubbee@ufs.ac.za
051 401 7355
CTL office number 369

From left back: Laura Drennan, Elmarie Lubbe, Annette de Wet, Arlys van Wyk, Francois Marais

Recognition of Prior Learning:
Facilitating different professional pathways

Tersia Kühne, Martie Meintjes & Christa Slabbert

The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) evaluates learning acquired outside an academic environment (corporate or military training, work experience, civic activity, or independent study) for the purpose of assigning academic credit. It assists supports applicants in the RPL process, as well as academic and support staff in the implementation thereof.

The work of the RPL Office is relevant and responsive in terms of the HE policy and legislation requirements. It is referred to in SA policy in The Higher Education Qualifications Framework Higher Education Act (DE: 2007) which clearly states that *"...institutions may recognise other forms of prior learning as equivalent to the prescribed minimum admission requirements, and may recognise other forms of prior learning for entry to given programmes."*

RPL at the Free State School of Nursing

In 2013, the RPL Office received 812 RPL enquiries and 460 applications. We recommended 344 individuals for an RPL process, and we tested 307 candidates between June and August 2013. This represents an increase in applications of 26% (N=92) compared to the previous year. Other training options were recommended to 115 applicants who were found not to comply with requirements.

From left back: Martie Meintjies, Christa Slabbert, Tersia Kuhne, Francois Marais

The Hospital Schools of the Free State region have been put under the auspices of the Free State School of Nursing (FSSON), and this provides the RPL office with an opportunity to add value to nursing education in the Free State.

Several merited FSSON RPL candidates who performed well in the RPL but who were not awarded bursaries for the four-year diploma in nursing can now be recommended for training as enrolled nursing auxiliaries and enrolled nurses at the Hospital Schools.

RPL at the University of the Free State

It is the responsibility of the RPL Office to assist academic and support staff in RPL implementation at the UFS. Furthermore, and most importantly, we are tasked to assist and support applicants in the RPL process. In 2013, the RPL Office received 576 enquiries; 259 applications and 169 assessments were processed. On Master's degree level, we received 119 enquiries; and 60 applications and 33 candidates were processed. We received one PhD application in Mathematical Statistics, and he was granted admission. On postgraduate diploma level, we received 301 enquiries and 140 applications. On Honours level, we received 8 enquiries and 6 applications.

We received 34 applications from candidates for credits with exemption in 45 modules.

Recent highlights

In 2013, the office had its peak experience in terms of success. Seven former RPL students were assessed, and the office determined that they had gained access to Honours in Urban and Regional Planning. Eventually, they completed their degrees, and enrolled for Master's.

Another high point for 2013 was that an academic staff member was granted a permanent position on the grounds of her RPL assessments against the outcomes of the appointment criteria. This illustrates the premise that RPL enhances lifelong learning. ■

From left: Martie Meintjies, Tersia Kuhne, Christa Slabbert

PASS: Can a little at the right time go a long way?

Mieke du Plessis

The aim of the Programme for Academic Student Success (PASS) is to provide comprehensive academic support, at high impact times of the academic year, to a specific group of at-risk, undergraduate students at the University of the Free State.

The programme is situated within the Centre for Teaching and Learning, and is coordinated from the Access and Success, Student Learning and Development, and Research on Teaching and Learning focus areas.

Background

The need for an academic support programme arose after longitudinal research was conducted on the 2006 cohort of UPP students[1]. Results from this research project indicated that, although the pass rate for UPP students was at 70%, only 30% of those students that passed their UPP year and entered the extended degree programmes, graduated from the University with a Bachelor's degree in 2010. This low throughput rate highlighted the need for the development of an academic support programme for these students, to assist them as they progress from their first year in the extended degree programmes, until they reach graduation.

Funding for PASS was provided by the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation (USA), and a team was called together in January 2013 to conceptualise and pilot an academic support programme by June 2013. What started out as a relatively small programme with a cohort of 642 students in 2013, has grown to include 1201 students in 2014, and we are expecting to grow to 1800 students in 2015, as the cohorts pass through UPP to join the extended degree programmes and are automatically included in PASS. The programme not only provides academic support, but also tracks all the students' academic progress to create an early warning system for at-risk students. Additionally, the team runs an action research project with a mixed methods design throughout the duration of the programme in order to track the process and success of the programme. Furthermore, it focuses on understanding what type of support at what times of the academic year has the greatest impact on student success, i.e. it seeks the *sweet spot* in academic support for an at-risk student cohort.

Although the students in question are automatically considered part of the programme and their academic performance is tracked, participation in the programme is voluntary. Currently, approximately 33% of our student cohort regularly attend our scheduled sessions and events.

"PASS is a programme that helps students who were in the University Preparation Programme and that are now in University. University is a huge step from the UPP and one has to adjust to this huge step. So PASS helps us manage the pressure and also helps us with academics."

[1] For more information about UPP students, read the section entitled *Innovation in access: 25 years of experience in access programmes.*

Delivery method

The delivery method of PASS comprises targeted contact sessions at high-impact times throughout the year, in order to provide specific academic support initiatives at times when the students need it most. Initially, the programme only consisted of the following types of sessions:

- Orientation ("Kick Start"): Scheduled at the beginning of the new academic year to introduce students to the programme, orientate them in respect of their new environment (new campus), communicate expectations, help them to navigate the system, and discuss the importance of setting goals and priorities.
- The Teaching and Learning Community (TLC) sessions: Scheduled quarterly to share targeted information that is important for that particular time of the academic year, and comprise smaller groups of students who are encouraged to attend faculty-specific slots.
- Wake Up & Shake Up: Scheduled at the start of the second semester to realign students' academic focus for the remainder of the year, motivate them, and share information to help them navigate the system.
- PASS Tutorial sessions: Scheduled throughout the academic year. High-risk modules are identified based on an analysis of the previous year's academic results, and the tutorial sessions are facilitated by PASS students from a senior cohort that obtained excellent results in the particular high-risk module.
- Chemistry initiative: A refresher course in Chemistry, scheduled in the second half of the second semester. This course is designed and facilitated in collaboration with the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences, and seeks to help post-UPP students prepare for their second year of Chemistry.
- Exam Boot Camp: Scheduled at the end of the academic semester, just before examinations start, in collaboration with the New Academic Tutorial Programme (NATP)[2]. The aim of these sessions is to help students to better prepare for the examinations by discussing exam expectations, how the module content will be assessed, and to work through old exam papers.
- Motivational events: Scheduled in the second semester, and presented by external, significant South Africans who relate specifically to post-UPP students.
- Online: Students can contact the PASS team via email, BlackBoard, and the PASS Facebook page. Currently, we have a growing community of 541 students on our Facebook page who regularly interact with the team.

- One-on-one: Students are invited to visit our offices at any given time throughout the year if they need information, support, or personal academic advising.

The content focus of these sessions is also delivered at high-impact times throughout the academic year, and includes themes such as registration, credit load, setting goals and priorities, good academic habits, motivation, preparing for exams, time management, bursary application information, and upcoming registration information. PASS also places a strong emphasis on academic and career alignment; the importance of the world of work, and skills for the workplace, as well as resource referral to create awareness of other support services offered by the institution, which contribute to students' academic success.

"It has changed my attitude towards my studies and has helped me realised what I needed to change. It helps you understand how the university life is like. Helps you load off the pressure and helps you study."

Research focus

As previously mentioned, the programme includes a longitudinal, mixed method, action research project, which involves tracking students' academic progress, PASS attendance records, and various qualitative data points that are gathered throughout the academic year as part of session evaluations. The data is used not only to track our students' academic progress, but also to better understand our students' needs and experiences at our institution, which feeds into the action research cycle, in order to provide relevant and innovative academic support.

[2] For more information about the NATP, please read the article entitled *Tutorials: Learning with and from each other.*.

The PASS team

What would you like to learn more about in PASS

Figure 1: Qualitative data analysis of Kick Start 2014 feedback

Needs identified in the Kick Start sessions at the start of the academic semester are taken into account when conceptualising the themes for TLC sessions throughout the year.

"The most important thing that I have learned is how you can achieve your goals and how to do you work in advance and how it can help you.
I have also learn no how to set up my priorities/priority."

Students attending the Kick Start session, 2013
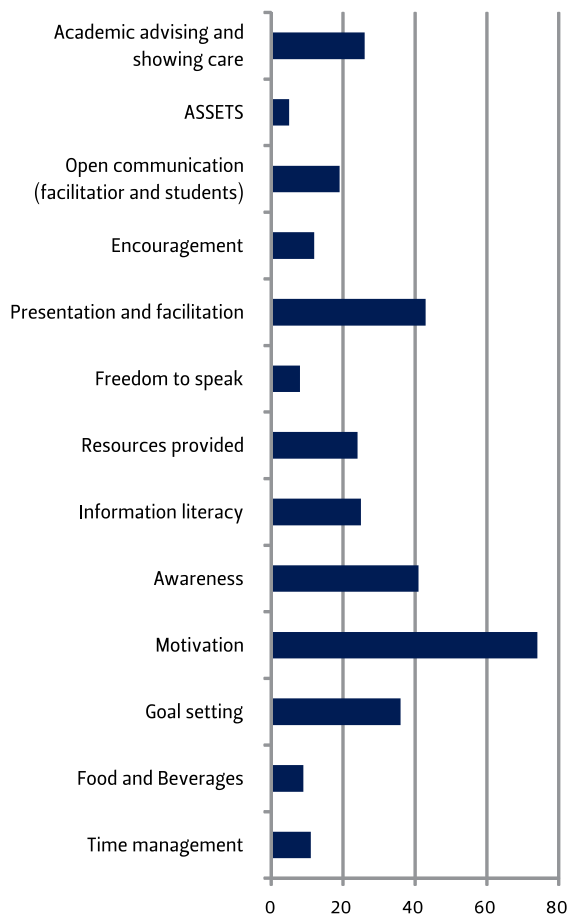
Factors liked during the session

Figure 2: Analysis of TLC evaluation data

Yes. I am more motivated and inspired to reach my dreams. I am very motivated and have willingness to learn anything beneficial to my insight and growth.

Success stories

The feedback from the students who have been part of the programme has been extremely positive. Some success stories include the story of Teli Mothabeng, a 2012 UPP student, who had an average of 43% for the first semester of 2013, and after taking part in the PASS, rose to an average of 72% for the second semester. After this excellent improvement, the PASS team invited him to present a short motivational speech at the end of the Kick Start session in 2014.

Towards the future

The current research focus is on whether PASS has had a causal impact on the students' academic performance, and on developing a programme structure that could be implemented institutionally. Finding the sweet spot in academic support for an at-risk student cohort could come off in the near future.

For more information about the PASS, please contact Mieke du Plessis at duplessism2@ufs.ac.za or 051 401 9889. ■

Question	Very often	Often	Sometimes	Never
How often do you prepare for classes?	3%	18.2%	59.8%	14.4%
How often do you attend class?	79.5%	15.2%	0	0
How often do you take notes in class while the lecturer is talking?	25%	34.1%	33.3%	3%
How often do you summarise the work you did in class, after class?	11.4%	22%	43.2%	18.2%
How often do you find yourself doing other things in the time that you should be studying?	13.6%	36.4%	41.7%	3%
How often do you prepare for tests and start completing assignments in advance (at least 2 weeks)?	22%	37.9%	31.1%	4.5%

Table 1: Students' responses to an academic habits survey

RESEARCH ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

SASSE: Using data for quality and success

Francois Strydom & Lana Swart

What is student engagement and the South African Surveys?

Student engagement research assumes the principle that what students do during their time at university matters with regard to their persistence and success. Student engagement is defined by two key concepts: firstly, what students do (the time and energy they devote to educationally purposeful activities) and secondly, what institutions do (the extent to which institutions employ effective educational practices). The aim of student engagement research is to further the development of effective educational institutions that are able to channel student energy to activities that matter by providing institutions with data on what students do and what institutions do.[1]

The South African Surveys of Student Engagement (SASSE) research team is committed to furthering student access with success by promoting quality teaching and learning institutionally and promoting collective impact on student success nationally. The SASSE research project aims to identify high impact practices that facilitate quality teaching and learning and promote student success within the South African higher education context.

Why is student engagement important?

Student engagement has become a global research focus with contextualised versions of the original survey on

Figure 1: Geographic illustration of the field of student engagement research

several continents and individual application in many countries (see Figure 1).

The South African Surveys of Student Engagement are based on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) based in the United States of America (USA). Since 2000, nearly 4.5 million students at more than 1500 institutions have completed the NSSE in USA and Canada. The NSSE has been contextualised and used in countries such as China, South Korea, and Mexico. An Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE) has been administered since 2007 in Australia and New Zealand. The SASSE was piloted in 2009, and the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) joined the family in 2013 as a state-funded national higher education initiative in all of Ireland's 19 higher education institutions.

[1] Kuh, G., Kinzie, J., Schuh, J, & Whitt, E. (2005). Student success in college: Creating conditions that matter. San Francisco: Josey-Bass.

New cycle of SASSE research

In October 2013, the CTL received a grant for US$820 000 (about R9 million) from the Kresge Foundation for the SASSE research project. Through this three-year project grant, the SASSE team aims to provide a range of

2014 - 11 institutions are participating in SASSE
2015 - 3 institutions already signed up

deeply contextualised and globally benchmarked student engagement measures that can be used at institutional and modular level in the South African context. The measure focuses on providing institutions with actionable data about practices that are under the control of institutions.

The Updated SASSE with new student engagement indicators

The new cycle of SASSE research will make use of the updated survey which underwent a two-year review process. This process included input from institutional representatives who participated in the national study, analysis of data from national administrations of the survey, input from the research team that worked on the project, input from eight South African higher education experts, and input from an international expert. To facilitate deep contextualisation, qualitative research was conducted at five institutions- involving 148 students in four provinces. The sets of new, updated, and continuing items were rigorously tested and grouped within several engagement indicators, organised within themes adapted from the former Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice.

Theme: Academic Effort
Higher-order learning
Reflective & integrative learning
Learning strategies
Quantitative reasoning

Theme: Learning with Peers
Collaborative learning
Discussions with diverse others

Theme: Experiences with Staff
Student-staff interaction
Effective teaching practices

Theme: Campus Environment
Quality of interactions
Supportive environment

Theme: High-Impact Practices
Collaborative assignments projects
Service learning
Leadership positions
Internships

Table 1: Updated SASSE themes and engagement indicators

Range of SASSE instruments

The CTL has developed six higher education student engagement surveys that can be used to improve the quality of undergraduate teaching and learning and to promote student success. In addition, participating institutions receive access to appropriate capacity development interventions to empower them to use the data to promote evidence-based change in their institutions. Table 2 lists the surveys that provide actionable data at institutional and modular levels.

Institutional Level Measures

Beginning University Survey of Student Engagement (BUSSE)

BUSSE measures entering first-year students' pre-university academic and co-curricular experiences and their expectations regarding participation in educationally purposeful activities during their first year at a tertiary institution. This data enables an institution to better understand of the experiences of high-risk students.

South African Survey of Student Engagement (SASSE)

SASSE gathers comprehensive information relating to the extent of student participation in effective educational practices as part of the teaching and learning experience.

Lecturer Survey of Student Engagement (LSSE)

LSSE measures lecturer expectations regarding student engagement in educational practices that are empirically linked with high levels of learning development.

Modular Level Measures

Classroom Survey of Student Engagement (CLASSE) – Lecturer and Student

CLASSE-Student asks students how frequently they engage in various educational practices within a specific course.

CLASSE-Lecturer asks the lecturer of that module/course how important the various educational practices are for facilitating student success.

Table 2: Range of South African Student Engagement Surveys

Using SASSE data to provide a data driven understanding of student engagement

First-year students

BUSSE provides data on entering first-year students' high school experiences, as well as their expectations of their first year at an institution.

BUSSE also provides institutions with in-time information on the modern day student population. The BUSSE data helps create a profile of the incoming cohort, which can be used to inform an early warning system and develop effective orientation programmes. Additionally, this data can be used to inform initiatives to be implemented on institutional, faculty, and individual levels.
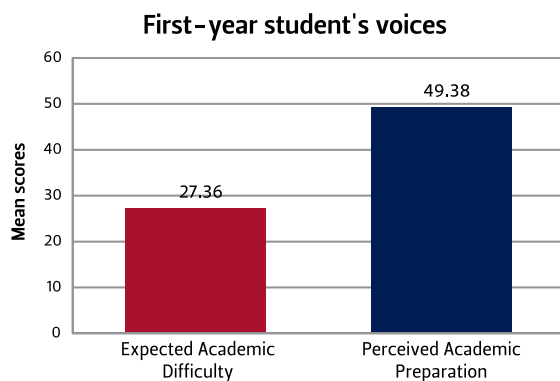

Figure 3: Example of SASSE data

Staff versus student perspectives

As indicated earlier, SASSE provides data on the extent of student participation in effective educational practices, while the LSSE provides lecturer expectations regarding student engagement in educational practices. Participating institutions are provided with a comparison report that enables them to see how the perspectives of staff and students differ.

Figure 2: Example of BUSSE data

Pilot data analysis has shown that students expect that university will not be that difficult (27/60). However, they perceive that their academic preparation is very high (49/60) (see Figure 2). One question that BUSSE data raises is "Are students' expectations and perceptions accurate"? In light of this data, institutions may consider developing orientation programmes and early warning systems to help students become more realistic about their level of preparedness and the level of academic challenge in higher education.

How students spend their time

SASSE annually collects information at participating universities about student participation in activities and programmes that promote their learning and personal development. The results provide an estimate of how undergraduates spend their time and what they gain from attending their university (see Figure 3).

Figure 4: Example of SASSE-LSSE data comparison

Figure 4 shows that there is a large difference between staff and student perceptions of whether students are putting forth their best work. This difference could suggest that students are not sure what is expected of them. This data could raise the question of whether expectations are clearly articulated to students.

Improving performance in high risk modules

A classroom adaptation of the Student Engagement Survey, the CLASSE, is a measure that provides data at the module or course level. The survey includes a student and a lecturer component to collecting data. Students report

on the frequency to which they participate in certain effective educational practices in a single module, while the lecturer(s) of that module rate the importance of the same effective educational practices in their class. The data from the student and staff surveys is analysed and tabulated in a quadrant analysis that can be used to facilitate a diagnostic conversation between the lecturer(s) of a module/course and staff development professionals (see Figure 5).

"I think the quadrant analysis will be the best way to go. Having an indication on where I "miss" my students' expectations can focus my attempts in a new direction. Trying to find out why students answered in a specific way may help to eliminate the pitfalls of thinking it's all OK."

– UFS, Qwaqwa lecturer

Quadrant Analysis

Figure 5: CLASSE quadrant analysis

Therefore CLASSE is an ideal diagnostic tool that can be used in a different, data-driven approach to academic staff development. Instead of confronting staff with low success rates only, CLASSE data can be used to help staff see where they and students are missing each other. CLASSE is supported by a website which links several step-by-step strategies to each item of the questionnaire. In this way the measure empowers staff developers and academic staff to create more engaging classrooms. ■

From left: Evodia Motsokobi, Gugu Khanye, Lana Swart, Lauren Hing, Michael Henn

Difficult Dialogues:
What you may not know

Deirdre van Jaarsveldt

The *Difficult Dialogues* project is an international initiative in higher education wherein the development of the art and skill of civil discourse is promoted.

University classrooms are ideal venues for creating democratic spaces in which students can learn the art of respectful argumentation where competing points of view are expressed, considered, and evaluated in an environment of mutual respect. The ability to encounter controversy with civility is considered to be an essential outcome of higher education, and each faculty contains a wealth of contentious issues to be explored.

The ideal conditions for civil discourse include an absence of external coercion, equal opportunity to contribute, participants being well informed on the topic to be discussed, and norms of courtesy such as active listening, studying issues in advance, taking turns to talk, and being willing to give up one's position if a better argument

is presented (Brookfield & Preskill 2005:272; Mezirow 2012:81). Discussions of this nature provide enriching and transformative learning opportunities for students (Jaschik 2009; Mezirow 2012:80). Research conducted throughout the course of the project implementation at the University of the Free State has confirmed that both staff and student participants have benefited in a variety of ways.

Benefits for interpersonal relationships

Engagement in respectful argumentation facilitates the development of respect not only for various perspectives, but for people who are different to oneself. It was found that a number of participants became more aware of their own biases and prejudices, as evidenced by some of the

responses to the question of what surprised them most during the *Difficult Dialogues* professional development workshops.

My own reaction to other people's perceptions of their culture – I have had to question again my own prejudices.

I was surprised at how I too still have a lot of internalised racism.

What surprised me most was the sudden empathy I had for Afrikaans speakers. I usually have little time for their plight, and am quite ashamed of that.

I realise that in some ways I've been in a position where my predominant religion/belief has shut others out!

The level of understanding I have developed for respecting others instead of outright judging them before knowing them.

This depth of self-awareness in the responses is significant as it indicates that transformative learning has taken place. Engaging with controversy has been found to be essential in assisting participants to widen their perspectives and to open avenues for transformative learning.

Difficult Dialogues participants are also presented with opportunities to enhance general life skills. Civil discourse requires participants to listen attentively, take turns in talking, and mindfully structure their verbal expressions so as not to offend others. They are also encouraged to make use of techniques such as perception checking to ensure that they have correctly interpreted the vocalisations of others. These skills assist participants to respond more constructively in conflict situations.

Relevance of the *Difficult Dialogues* project for teaching and learning

The facilitation of civil discourse requires a learner-centred approach where the educator is continuously mindful about what and how students are learning. The design of the project therefore promotes student engagement, and all workshops are presented by means of experiential learning. A variety of learning activities are presented to cater for the diversity of learning styles, personalities, and interests, represented in an average university classroom. Educators who participate in the professional development workshops have an opportunity to enhance their facilitation skills by experiencing these techniques first-hand.

Libby Roderick, University of Alska

Deep learning is encouraged in a variety of ways. Participants are expected to prepare academic work prior to discussion and reflective exercises such as silent reflection and reflective writing are foundational to the project. Equal participation in class is ensured by the use of various discussion techniques presented in listening pairs, small groups, and discussion tables. This enhances successful collaborative learning practices. Through an exploration of various views, participants are encouraged to discover the complexity of issues rather than following the natural inclination to simplify and categorise. A number of strategies are employed to stimulate higher cognitive skills, for example critical thinking, logic, argumentation, and expressive language skills.

The project supports a "development by research" approach, and educators are encouraged to reflect critically on their practice in order to improve what they are doing. All academic staff participants are requested to apply what they have learnt in their classrooms and to record the implementation process for research purposes. They are encouraged and supported to prepare an academic article and make a valuable contribution towards the advancement of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.

Flexibility of the project in a variety of contexts

The project has been adapted to suit the needs of various faculties and departments. For example, eighteen facilitators within the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences received professional development during regularly scheduled meetings, which were held over a period of two years. After a mini-workshop with first-year students on conflict management and respect for diversity, the School of Nursing began incorporating *Difficult Dialogues* sessions into the undergraduate programme. Sessions have also been presented on "*Difficult Dialogues* in the workplace" and "Promoting transcultural learning through Service Learning". These and other initiatives have proven the flexibility and relevance of the foundational aspects of the project. Furthermore, many participants have reported that they could find application for what they had learnt in contexts removed from the university.

For more information about the project, please contact Deirdre van Jaarsveldt at +27 (0)51 401 9380 or vjaarsvd@ufs.ac.za.

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Libby Roderick with Deirdre van Jaarsveldt, presenting a Difficult Dialogues workshop to staff at the UFS

Implementing Universal Design for Learning:

Helping one student helps all

Charity Ndeya-Ndereya

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a teaching and learning strategy which promotes effective teaching with the purpose of making learning more accessible and inclusive to all students, irrespective of their learning-related idiosyncrasies and challenges.

Open access to universities has resulted in the student population becoming increasingly diverse in terms of students' languages of instruction; preparation for higher education; learning styles; note-taking abilities; and academic acuity, physical, sensory, or learning abilities. The CTL at the UFS envisages that the learning experiences of such a diverse cohort of students could be improved by the implementation of the UDL principles.

The Centre for Applied Special Technology (CAST) in the USA enunciates three UDL guiding principles that form pillars for teaching and learning (CAST 2011).

Principle 1: Provide Multiple Means of Representation
Principle 2: Provide Multiple Means of Action and Expression
Principle 3: Provide Multiple Means of Engagement

These principles are used in curriculum design and development for the purpose of leveling the playing field of learning by ushering in equal opportunities for learning.

The application of UDL principles incorporates the use of the nine principles of universal design for instruction originally espoused by Scott, McGuire, and Shaw (2006: 170) including:

1. *Equitable use* – The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities;
2. *Flexibility in use* – The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities;
3. *Simple and intuitive use* – Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level;

4. *Perceptible information* – The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities;

5. *Tolerance for error* – The design minimises hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions;

6. *Low physical effort* – The design can be used efficiently, comfortably, and with a minimum of fatigue;

7. *Size and space for approach and use* – Instruction is designed with consideration for appropriate size and space for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of the user's body size, posture, mobility, and communication needs;

8. *A community of learners* – The instructional environment promotes interaction and communication among students and between students and faculty; and

9. *Instructional climate* – Instruction is designed to be welcoming and inclusive. High expectations are espoused for all students.

The CTL is committed to promoting the incorporation of UDL in curriculum design and development at the UFS, and introduced UDL as a pilot project in 2014-2015. Staff members from the Curriculum Development and Innovation (CDI) focus area underwent a series of training workshops on UDL during the first semester of 2014. In addition, brief UDL sessions were held with the Faculty of Law Learning Community and Teaching and Learning Managers. A workshop attendee summarised her understanding of UDL in the form of a diagram (see Figure 1 below).

This diagrammatic representation illustrates the embedding of UDL principles into assessment, as a step-by-step process. The diagram therefore provides a useful visual tool which can be used by learning designers when explaining the application of UDL to the assessment of learning. In addition, the diagram serves as evidence that an attendee had achieved learning at a high cognitive level by creating a visual representation of the content. It is also an illustration of an alternative method of assessment. ◾
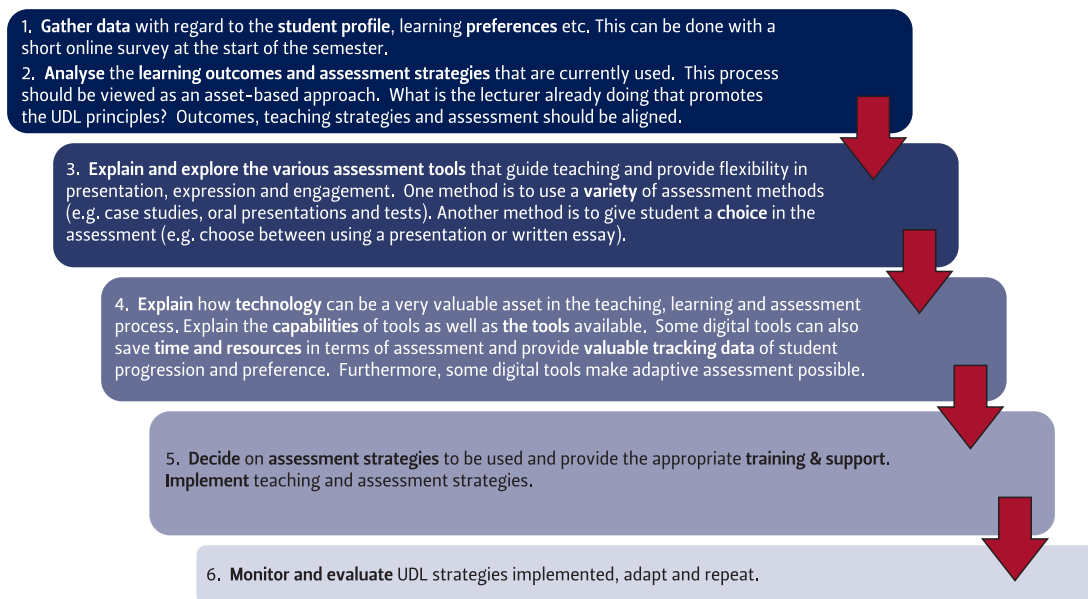
1. **Gather data** with regard to the **student profile**, learning **preferences** etc. This can be done with a short online survey at the start of the semester.
2. **Analyse** the **learning outcomes and assessment strategies** that are currently used. This process should be viewed as an asset-based approach. What is the lecturer already doing that promotes the UDL principles? Outcomes, teaching strategies and assessment should be aligned.

3. **Explain and explore the various assessment tools** that guide teaching and provide flexibility in presentation, expression and engagement. One method is to use a **variety** of assessment methods (e.g. case studies, oral presentations and tests). Another method is to give student a **choice** in the assessment (e.g. choose between using a presentation or written essay).

4. **Explain** how **technology** can be a very valuable asset in the teaching, learning and assessment process. Explain the **capabilities** of tools as well as **the tools** available. Some digital tools can also save **time and resources** in terms of assessment and provide **valuable tracking data** of student progression and preference. Furthermore, some digital tools make adaptive assessment possible.

5. **Decide** on **assessment strategies** to be used and provide the appropriate **training & support**. **Implement** teaching and assessment strategies.

6. **Monitor and evaluate** UDL strategies implemented, adapt and repeat.

Figure 1: A stepwise process for embedding UDL principles into assessment (Kruger & Ndeya-Ndereya 2014)

Learning in Law:
The Law Faculty starts decoding its teaching and learning

Annette Wilkinson

The Learning in Law Project was launched in February 2013. The purpose was to identify and address teaching and learning problems in the Faculty of Law.

In the implementation phase of the project, the objective was to establish and empower a critical, reflective learning community among lecturers in the Faculty of Law. This was accomplished through regular meetings and workshops; sharing of relevant literature and other documentation; and ongoing reflection on practices, experiences, and needs. This phase served as a precursor to the more formal phase of decoding in 2014.

During 2013, the group 16 members met 15 times and actively participated in their own empowerment. They gained knowledge on student engagement and the use of technology in legal education, and they embarked on lively discussions on teaching and learning in their discipline and many started to implement changes in their own classroom practices. In October, they roused campus-wide interest with their presentation in the format of a court case at the Teaching and Learning Excellence Showcase entitled: *The case for innovative teaching and learning in the discipline.*

What is Decoding the Disciplines?

The project adopted the principal idea of Decoding the Disciplines, as developed and followed in the History Learning Project at Indiana University, USA. Theoretically, the model is based on the large differences in thinking among academic fields. The seven-step decoding process begins with the identification of student learning obstacles or "bottlenecks" by experts in the field. These obstacles serve as markers to indicate where disciplinary thinking
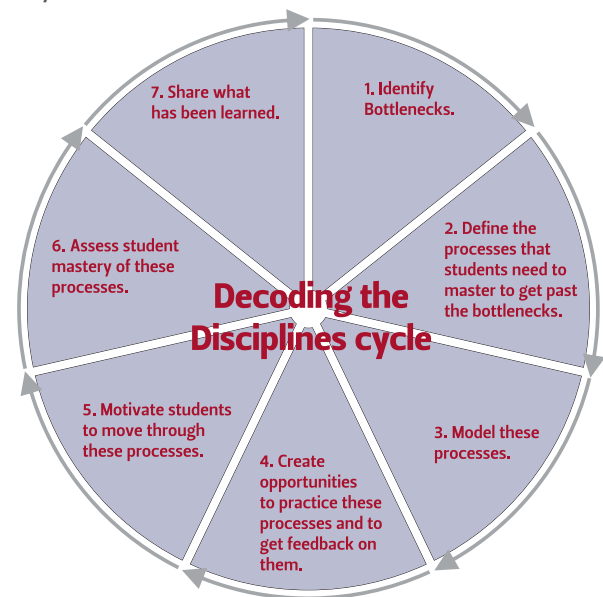

Figure 1: Graphic illustration of the decoding process

is not being made clear to students. Ways are then found to model this thinking for students. After giving students opportunities to practise these skills and receive feedback, lecturers assess student performance on these basic operations and share their results in order to make them public.

Identification of teaching and learning problems in Law

Involvement in the scholarly process of becoming critical has helped the group to identify general and subject-

specific problems in their teaching and search for possible solutions to problems identified. The synergy of community and collaboration has motivated the participants to gain insight into their own teaching and learning environments.

In the beginning, the problems identified were mainly of an organisational nature (big classes, inappropriate syllabi, and heavy workloads) and problems with students (weak school system, lazy, spoiled, low class attendance, and inadequate language proficiency). There were also references to specific classroom problems such as students' reluctance to take part in discussions or to prepare for class. In written feedback, one community member referred to "the culture of putting in as little as possible in order to achieve the minimum required results". Another participant mentioned that many students "ignore case law prescribed and use previous years' books and study material". A lack of student motivation was mentioned as another major concern: "Students have a distorted picture of what it entails to be an attorney or advocate", "they are not really interested in studying law, they simply want a degree in order to earn a huge salary", and "often they are forced by their parents to do so". Gradually, community members started exposing a series of shortcomings in their own teaching practices. However, they realised for example that "we are spoon-feeding students", that "students learn in different ways e.g. visual, by hearing etc.", and that "some subjects require more frequent forms of assessment than others". A lack of training "in terms of teaching subjects, for new lecturers/current lecturers" was also acknowledged.

As in the typical decoding process, students' learning problems in law – the "bottlenecks" or discipline-specific learning obstacles – were gradually exposed. Examples of the obstacles identified were the difficulty students experienced in reading case law; lack of critical thinking skills; the importance and associated difficulty of organising learning material in Law on a cognitive level; and a general lack of confidence or skills in speaking up, arguing, or debating a point.

The way forward

When asked for feedback on the most valuable aspects of the project, the Community of Law lecturers mentioned aspects such as "sharing ideas with colleagues", "being introduced to new ideas and concepts we can apply in class", "learning from each other", and "creating a better relationship with colleagues". The focus on the creation of the motivational conditions of inclusion, and enhanced meaning, attitude, and competence have certainly added to a feeling of belonging to and purpose in the group. Their personal roles in the sharing and gaining of knowledge on

theory and practice undoubtedly added to the enhanced competence and an ambience of "want to" instead of "have to" in the project. Community members developed some understanding of the importance of student engagement in their specific higher education environment. As lecturers in the digital era, they became more interested in all the possibilities of utilising educational technology in law teaching and learning. The group as a whole certainly became better equipped to identify possible solutions to the various problems they had identified and to start implementing the solutions – the next step envisaged in the decoding process.

A direct outflow of the adoption of the decoding approach in the Law Project was the week-long visit by David Pace from Indiana University in January 2014. During his visit, he presented nine workshops on the decoding process, including two on the Qwaqwa campus and two specifically for the Learning in Law community. Pace expressed his amazement at the synergy in the group, the positive attitudes, and the openness in which members expressed their opinions and argued about matters. The knowledge gained from Pace's visit will help these lecturers to continue the decoding process in 2014 and implement strategies to address the identified "bottlenecks" in their discipline. As part of the project, the impact of all changes in practice will be evaluated carefully and shared in the Faculty, as well as in the wider Law education community in the country and beyond.

The project is coordinated by Manie Moolman of Law, Annette Wilkinson, Deirdre van Jaarsveldt, and Charity Ndeya of the CTL. ◼

Members of the Learning in Law community presenting in the format of a court case during the Teaching and Learning Excellence Showcase in October 2013.

STUDENT LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

UFS101: Flipping the core

Lauren Oosthuizen

University 101 (UFS101), the core curriculum module which is compulsory for all first-year students, was piloted in 2011 with 200 students and now serves 5000 students across all three UFS campuses. The aim of the module is to equip students with the skills to understand and engage with complex human problems from multiple perspectives.

Students are taught to engage critically with the latest national and international ideas, issues, and worldviews. Students are exposed to provocative questions aimed at disrupting existing knowledge and ways of thinking by engaging them in some of the "big issues" across different disciplines.
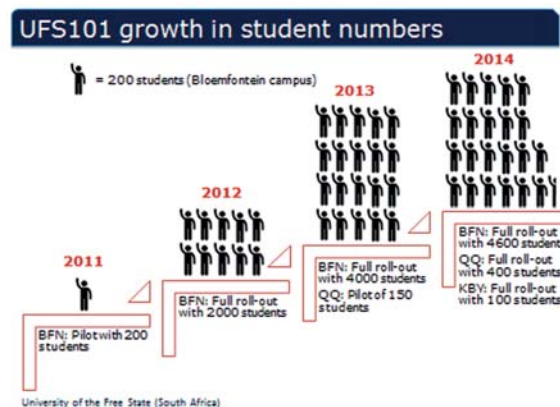
How do we become democratic and cultivated citizens?	Anthropology
Your rights versus my rights?	Law
Why is the financial crisis global?	Economics
How green is green?	Chemistry
How should we deal with our violent past?	History
Are we alone here?	Astrophysics and Astrobiology
How do people change?	Social Psychology

Table 1: Current topics in UFS101

In 2011-2013, UFS101 followed a blended learning approach that made use of large classes to deliver lectures, large class experiential learning, small group tutorial classes, and online learning with Blackboard as the main learning platform.

This 16-credit module is unique in the sense that no other South African university offers a similar academic curriculum on such a large scale. In 2014, the UFS101 implementation team flipped the classroom for 4600 students at the Bloemfontein campus, 400 students at the Qwaqwa campus, and 26 students at the Kimberley campus. The module was also outsourced to the Sol Plaatjies University in 2014 and served 75 students there.

Infographic 1: Growth in UFS101 student numbers

An online survey is administered at the end of each semester in this year's module, and participation in the survey is voluntary. Students reported the level of academic challenge in module to be appropriate. The following quote is indicative of the balance between challenge and support, a balance that the UFS101 implementation team is conscious of throughout the process of continuous curriculum development (see Figure 1):

"I am an accounting major yet I could fairly comprehend the content of all the units and where I fell a bit short, the available materials on blackboard and the study guide helped me to fill in the blanks."
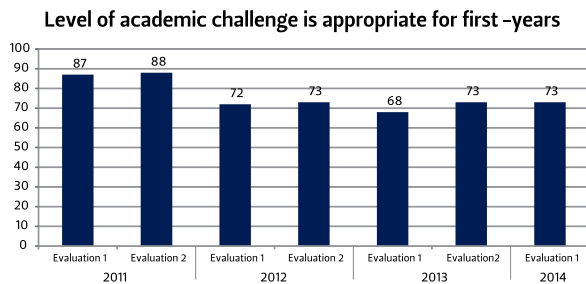
Level of academic challenge is appropriate for first –years

Figure 1

The investment in the teaching assistants by way of thorough facilitation training and difficult dialogues training pays off year after year, as is evident from student feedback (see Figure 2):

"The learning facilitators were prepared and the fellow students respected each other's views. Tutorials were a chance for us to sit down with fellow students all from different back rounds [sic] and to just talk with each other. The facilitators created a pleasant atmosphere and I really enjoyed UFS101!"

The introduction of a step-by-step class discussion guide for the teaching assistants in 2014 has been effective, as can be seen in the higher ratings of the teaching assistants in evaluation 1 of 2014 (Figures 2a and 2b).
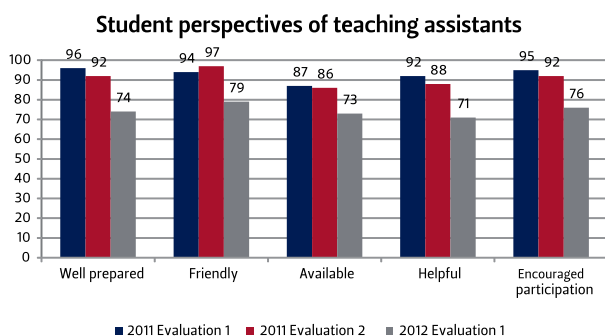
Student perspectives of teaching assistants

Figure 2a

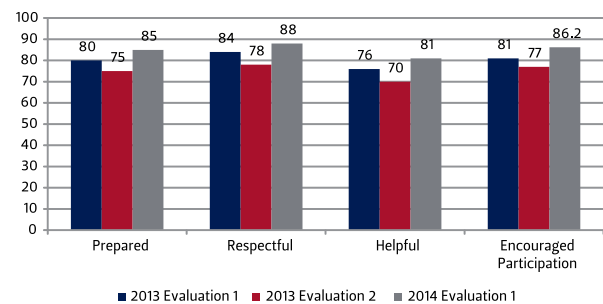**Student perspectives of teaching assistants**

Figure 2b

The UFS101 learning experiences seek to bring real-world experiences into the classroom, which range from interaction with the governor of the Reserve Bank, to cleaning up your digital footprint, to the astronomy fair. There are seven learning experiences in total. Students are asked to share their views of the learning experiences at the end of each semester:

"I have to admit the learning experiences were so out of the box. I learnt so much that i did not know and how to look at issues differently. I walk away a very different person."

Annual formative evaluation has thus far allowed for an objective look at student responses, as has observation in large lecture classes presented to approximately 1500 students per session. It is evident that the large class does not result in the same level of student engagement as the small class tutorials, hence the introduction of a new and improved mode of delivery of UFS101 in 2014.

The improved mode of delivery of UFS101, introduced in 2014, makes use of the flipped classroom approach as its teaching and learning methodology. This means that students watch the lectures online before coming to class. This allows for enhanced student engagement in the classroom as students are expected to apply the information they received via the online lecture to case studies, debates, discussions, and more. The 2014 delivery structure consists of online lectures, large class learning experiences, and small group discussion classes. The majority of students find it helpful to access materials before class, as is the case with UFS101, and it was found that the flipped classroom enhances their learning and that their learning in other modules would also be enhanced if those modules were also delivered in this way.

The first semester survey yielded positive results when students were asked what they thought of the flipped classroom, as is evident in Figure 3.
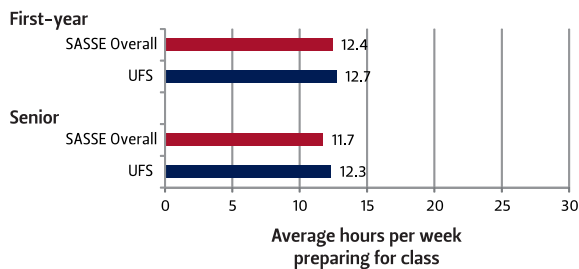
Figure 3

Students further expressed their views of the flipped classroom in an open-ended question.

"it exposed me to other ways of learning and thinking"

"the way they lecture us was unique and interesting"

"The videos that we watched, combined with discussions was perfect. Well prepared lecturers was fantastic."

"The eGuide had step by step instruction and obviously it included the videos which were of tremendours help particularly when attempting MCQ assessments."

"The fact that you could download it and take the videos home with you to watch them there."

"The videos provided on the eGuide were very useful.They actually made me enjoy the module :-)"

"I liked the videos because I am a visual learner, and as a result learning became easy for me."

The interactive eGuides, consisting of the online lectures, reading material, videos, glossaries and extra resources replaced the printed module guide in 2014.

Most students (72%) found the eGuides easy to use:

"Everything was more or less in one place therefore making it easy to find."

"I liked the fact that it is easy to access and very helpful when I answer the MCQ tests. It makes UFS more approachable understandable and enjoyable."

"it is easy to use and you are able to find what you want in a split second."

When students were asked what they liked about UFS101, the flipped classroom was raised again, with most students (80%) indicating that they were able to discuss content with one another in discussion classes:

"How information is delivered to students"

"it deliver the information in a good way"

"The discussion classes as well as being forced to go through the work before the discussion classes because of the MCQ tests."

"the discussion classes are a breath of fresh air. most classes in other modules should try this"

"The online discussion and videos"

"I like that it tought me team or group work,it also help me use technology more and more. before i go to class daily i now know i have to prepare for class"

Innovative teaching and learning is at the top of the UFS101 priority list. As the project grows in numbers and matures in delivery, its successful nature is evidence of innovative teaching and learning at the University of the Free State. ▪

Tutorials: Learning with and from each other

Evodia Motsokobi & Sanet Kruger

Peer learning is one of the most effective ways in which students can support each other's learning, especially in the current context of strained university resources.[1]

The New Academic Tutorial Programme (NATP) was established in July 2007 with 15 tutors in two faculties. It has since grown to 321 tutors in six faculties and provides tutorial support across 230 modules on both the Bloemfontein and Qwaqwa campuses. The programme further includes a customised model for residences and the Unit for Students with Disabilities. The programme identifies high-risk modules, as opposed to high-risk students.

The NATP model incorporates principles of Supplemental Instruction (SI) tutorial approaches, as well as technology and innovation in teaching and learning, which all form part of blended learning. The model can therefore be considered a hybrid model.

The tutors that form part of the programme are trained in teaching and learning methods based on the SI model in order to create a peer-facilitated learning environment in which the tutor serves as a model student and subject-specific content is integrated with learning skills. The NATP encourages regular attendance of tutorials and believes that continued participation over time plays an important role in student success.

Impact

Towards the goal of continued improvement and critical self-reflection, the NATP examines its impact on academic performance and evaluates tutors on a bi-annual basis. The following graphs show the impact of the NATP in three faculties.
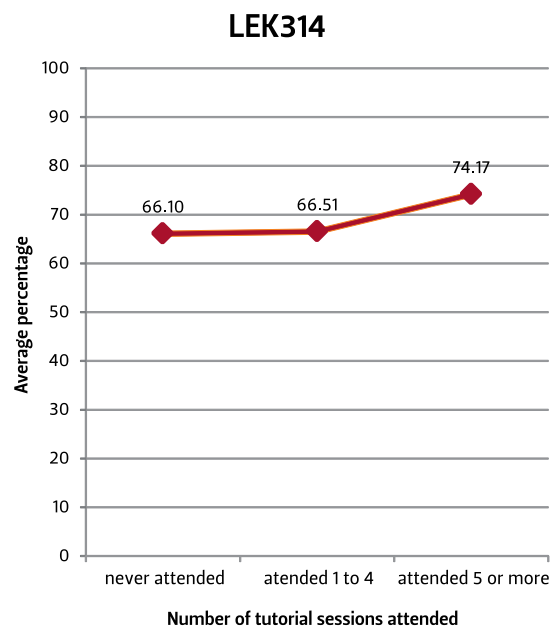

LEK314

Average percentage vs Number of tutorial sessions attended

- never attended: 66.10
- attended 1 to 4: 66.51
- attended 5 or more: 74.17

Figure 1: Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences

[1] Tomorrow's Professor Msg.#418 WHAT IS PEER LEARNING AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT? http://web.stanford.edu/dept/CTL/Tomprof/postings/418.html
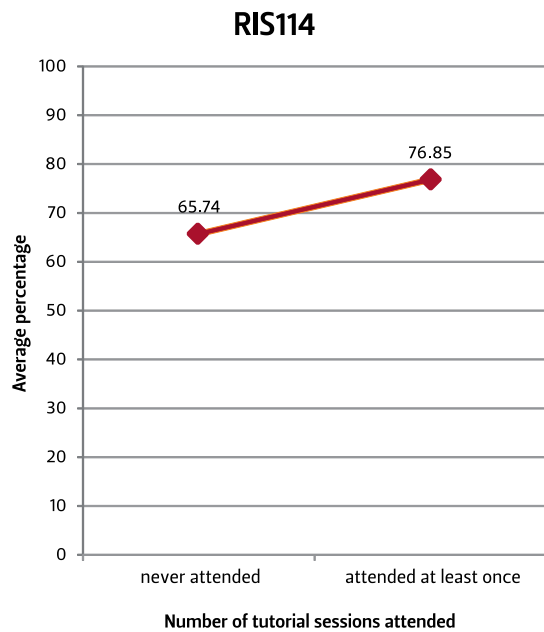
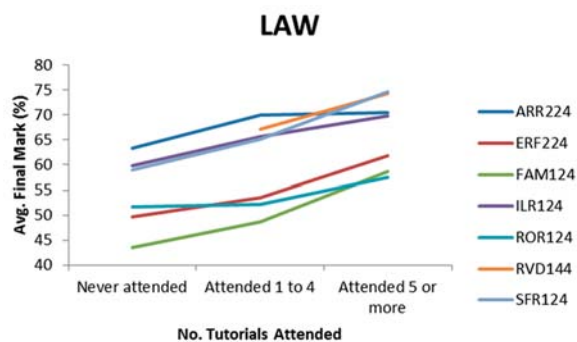Figure 2: Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences
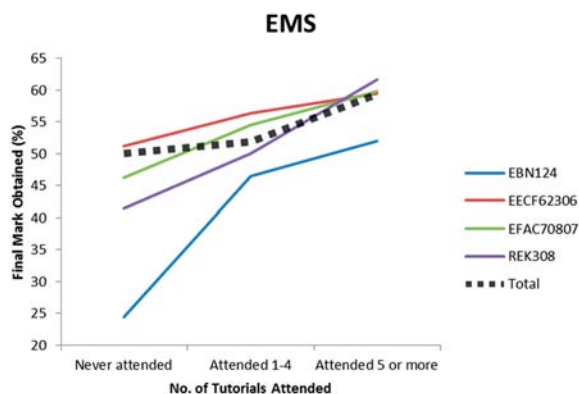

Figure 3: Faculty of Law, Semester 1: 2014

Figure 4: Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, Semester 1: 2014

In short, recent data analysis revealed that impact increased for most modules. Attendance of tutorial sessions presented in the NATP is associated with significant improvements in the academic performance of students, even when controlling for previous academic performance. More specifically, students with lower previous academic performance benefited from increased tutorial attendance, as did students entering the module with high levels of previous academic performance.

Students who attended at least one tutorial performed significantly better than those who attended no tutorials. Furthermore, students who attended more than five tutorials performed significantly better than students who only attended one to four tutorials, or no tutorials at all.

Viewed in combination, these findings suggest that consistent and ongoing tutorial attendance during any given semester was associated with improved academic performance.

Infographic 1: NATP success

Other stakeholders that benefit from the NATP

Tutors

The benefits of the programme extend beyond student-specific outcomes. Tutors develop valuable skills that not only benefit their own academic career, but equip them for the environment in which they will conceivably be employed. Some tutors pursue careers in higher education as a result of their involvement in the programme. Moreover, tutors report an intrinsic satisfaction experienced when their tutorial students enjoy the module and achieve academic success.

The NATP selects and rewards talent and offers competitive remuneration rates. Talent is mentored by creating opportunities and developmental pathways. Tutors are often selected for more challenging positions such as research assistantship and more permanent positions as a result of the experience gained in the programme. Care is taken to create an environment in which capacity development, equity, and excellence become mutually reinforcing.

Past and current NATP tutors had positive remarks about their involvement in the programme.

"Higher education is my passion, and working with students has been and always will be a privilege." -Beaulah Kruger

"Tutoring is about giving people's dreams wings and paying it forward." -Inlorr Bosch

"I got an immense head start in now being able to be one step ahead when applying for work." -Eben Swanepoel

2.2 Staff members

Staff members that coordinate the NATP within faculties benefit from the programme and express their appreciation for the meaningful collaboration and administrative support from the NATP team. In addition, staff members report increased job satisfaction levels as well as personal and professional growth such as time management, communication, and interpersonal skills, as a result of their involvement in the programme.

Herewith quotes from past and current NATP staff members:

"More and more I realise what a blessing/calling it is to work with students because I learn something new every day. The NATP is a way forward for the University." -Tibi Kibe – Faculty of Humanities

"Reflecting on the past five years, there is a sense of joy and pride to realise all the achievements and growth of the programme in the University, the Faculty of Health Sciences." -Mpho Jama

The exploration and growth of online tutoring as part of the NATP

Since 2010, various online tutoring initiatives have been undertaken by different faculties in response to a variety of challenges, such as large student numbers and a lack of infrastructure as well as opportunities that include additional platforms for student support and skills development. The implementation of online tutoring as part of the NATP has led to the following outcomes:

- The establishment of an alternative platform for learning in response to logistical problems associated with a lack of venues and large student numbers;
- Students are exposed to a different approach to learning, interaction with fellow students, and the module content, thereby addressing different styles of learning;
- Students learn how to collect and critically evaluate information that is available electronically;
- Additional opportunities are created for the development of academic writing, interpersonal and online communication, critical thinking, as well as computer skills; and
- Students are supported to gradually move to more complex activities- from accessing the system to exchanging information and taking part in discussions.

The online tutoring initiatives that form part of the NATP introduce educational technology and the use of the tools available on learning management systems such as Blackboard, while recognising the merit in retaining face-to-face contact and use of more traditional approaches to teaching.

What impact does the use of online tutors and online tutorial activities have?

The findings of the online tutorial data correspond to the results of the face-face tutorial data.

Evaluation of the online tutorial data produced the following core findings:
- The completion of online tutorial activities had a direct positive impact on the academic performance of students, within a first-year module;
- Regardless of their academic performance in high school, all students benefited academically from regularly completing online tutorial activities; and
- Students who never completed any online tutorial activities performed at significantly lower levels in the module than those who completed one to four online tutorial activities. Those students who completed all

five online tutorial activities performed significantly better than both of the aforementioned groups.

The qualitative data showed that students had positive experiences with the online activities and interaction with their tutors. Furthermore, students became more confident to complete more challenging online activities with the help of an online tutor:

"Yes it was a very good experience for me .Especially when my tutor encourages us to search for information. We keep encouraging one another in my group. I'm really going to miss these group interactions.

"I enjoyed it particularly because we all had different ideas and questions, someone else would ask a question that would benefit me in the end. I must say I had very nice group members and they were people I did not know, so it was quite fun for me."

In the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, students were asked to complete a self-reported survey on the skills they had developed or improved on as a result of the online tutorial activities. The results showed that over half of respondents indicated that their computer skills (59%), critical thinking skills (59%), and test preparation skills (64%) had improved as a result of the completion of the online tutorial activities facilitated by online tutors. Nearly half (49%) of the respondents indicated that their reading skills had improved. Interestingly, the majority of these students (89%) found the learning management system easy to use.

Concluding thoughts

To conclude, the NATP aids and continues with the learning processes that begins in the classroom and students are granted sufficient time to independently master challenging concepts and ideas. In addition, students, tutors, and staff members develop a variety of skills through the programme and benefit from collaborating in their work groups, irrespective of the environment or platform. ∎

NATP 2014 Winners

Academic Advising: Minding the gap

Wendy Khayne

The need for a proactive academic advising approach was driven by two main concerns: the lack of sufficient career guidance in schools and the problematic retention rates of the UFS.

The need for a proactive academic advising approach was driven by two main concerns: the lack of sufficient career guidance in schools and the problematic retention rates of the UFS. The lack of structured career guidance in schools is constantly being questioned by the Higher Education sector, the public, politicians, and prospective students, while low retention rates have severe negative implications for disadvantaged students and their families.[1]

Academic Advising (AA) at the University of the Free State (UFS) is defined as a developmental teaching and learning process where the institution establishes and fosters a relationship with students and supports them to succeed academically and as life-long learners in the future.

Research conducted to develop the UFS academic advising system revealed that, despite existing institutional procedures, students were overloading themselves by registering for too many credits. This led to a more detailed credit-overload analysis with aims of:

- Providing a longitudinal institutional and faculty-level overview of the extent of students' "credit-overloading" trends at the UFS;
- Evaluating the academic advising support available to students in the faculties;
- Understanding the causes of credit-overload; and

- Proposing ways forward to improve credit loading at the time of student registration through academic advising.

The results highlighted and prompted further exploration of the causes of credit overload in programmes. Four reasons for student credit-overloading were identified: the need for curriculum renewal, the lack of and therefore need for the clear definition of "year of study" and "rules of progression", investment in and development of academic advising capacity in faculties and other support services during critical periods such as registration, and continued development of a systemic approach to academic advising at the UFS.

The research empowered role-players to prioritize and monitor the credit loads of students. This intervention led to a significant decline in the number of students with credit-overload per faculty. This can be attributed to several factors, including: the curriculum review process, extensive advising and monitoring, and the increase in student enrolment requirements- which yielded a positive correlation in relation to student credit-loading and progression.

With an overall decline in student enrolment numbers at the UFS during 2011–2013, the stringent regulations implicated that the institution was raising the enrolment requirements in an attempt to improve student retention and success rates.

When correlating the overall student credit-loading with success rates per faculty, it is evident that, with

[1] Masemola, L. 2010. Pupils are left stranded at career crossroads. Pretoria News, 21 July. p7.

continuous commitment, the faculties have been able to develop measures of improving student registration such as capacity development and academic advising training. This enables planning towards more effective support for students from enrolment to graduation.
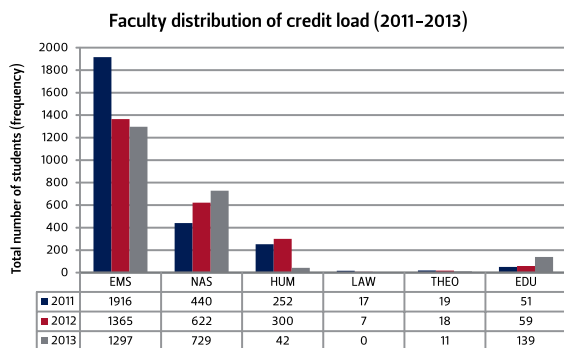
Faculty distribution of credit load (2011–2013)

	EMS	NAS	HUM	LAW	THEO	EDU
2011	1916	440	252	17	19	51
2012	1365	622	300	7	18	59
2013	1297	729	42	0	11	139

Figure 1: UFS Credit overload trends 2011 – 2013 across 6 faculties

A report compiled from a study conducted by Volkwein and Lorang (1996) shows that a student's credit load in the first semester tends to be a predictor of the credit load in the second semester. Although literature does not prove causally that credit load has an impact on academic success, trends have emerged that show that academic student support and increased student success have resulted in an educational climate change.

During the 2014 annual registration process, a survey was distributed to better understand the student experience of academic advising and relationships established between the institution and students at the beginning of the academic year. Findings illustrate responses from 2273 students- 64% of the respondents were senior students and 33% first-time entering students. The report highlights reasons why students at the UFS had or did not have sufficient academic advising support to help them understand their curriculum and establish a sense of belonging, fostered through intrusive and developmental advising.

At the UFS, with continued support and fostering of relationships, the academic advising community could significantly contribute to engaging students and promoting academic success, which will lead to graduates engaging in lifelong learning. ◼
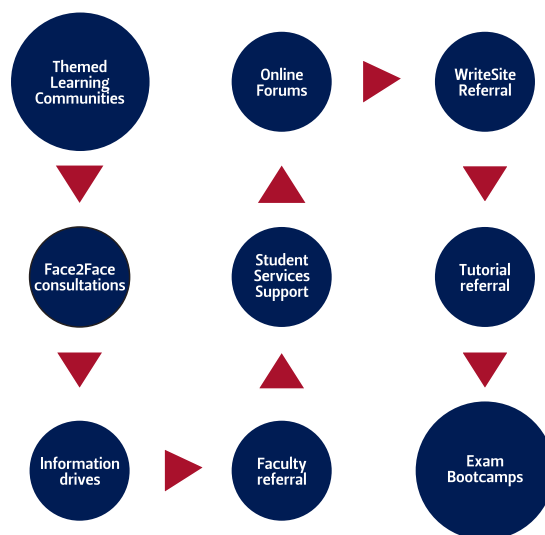

Figure 2: Other academic advising approaches at the UFS

CURRICULUM DELIVERY AND INNOVATION

Champion's league:

Leaders in using technology at the UFS

Danila Liebenberg

"Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower." – Steve Jobs

The CTL commissioned the report entitled *Mapping of Technology Leaders at the UFS.* Thirteen champions were identified and interviewed, nine participants from the Bloemfontein campus and four from the Qwaqwa campus of the UFS.

These in-depth interviews sought to investigate how lecturers use technology to enhance learning, and included questions regarding the technological tools that are used, how they are used, and how they contribute to the lecturer's teaching objectives. The most common tools used on the platform of the learning management system, namely Blackboard 9.13, are:

- Packaged content;
- Quizzes published to Blackboard via Respondus;
- Flipped classroom, created on Blackboard or Autoplay with the use of adaptive release to manage progress;
- Videos, created with Camtasia for computers and the Explain Everything app for iPads, imported from online sources like YouTube or published from DVDs included in textbook packages;
- Discussion forums;
- Bulk emails; and
- Wikis.

Some lecturers indicated that they make an effort to also use *Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter*, the Blackboard mobile phone app, *MXit*, high-fidelity simulations, and iPads in their modules and presentations.

They reported that these tools assisted with the interaction with learning material, provided non-stop access to the learning material, developed critical thinking, and accommodated different learning styles and speeds.

Furthermore, they agreed that the usage of technology fostered independent learning.

These champions encourage the teaching strategy of blended learning- a teaching and learning style that requires distance delivery and self-study. According to the lecturers interviewed, Blackboard makes blended learning possible.

Furthermore, they are of the opinion that the material upload to Blackboard complements the face-to-face lectures.

Several of these champions are flipping their classrooms, which requires students to prepare for lectures before attending class, as an innovative approach to teaching and learning using Blackboard.

The UFS's champions' league team represents the UFS as technological leaders in a competitive and innovative world. ■

Mariëtte Koen
Faculty of Education
Bloemfontein Campus

Carel van Wyk
Faculty of the Humanities
Bloemfontein Campus

Cynthia Spies
Faculty of Health Sciences
Bloemfontein Campus

Joe Serekoane
Faculty of the Humanities
Bloemfontein Campus

Liezel Nel
Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences
Bloemfontein Campus

Vernon Louw
Faculty of Health Sciences
Bloemfontein Campus

Pushing the boundaries of blended learning and instructional design

Danila Liebenberg

Organisational improvement architects differentiate between creativity and innovation. Creativity involves the development of new ideas, while innovation brings these ideas to life. Innovation adds value by transforming old, organisational forms and practices.

In 2007, a Booz Allen study indicated that the key characteristics of successful innovation lie in the management thereof. It is "a disciplined, stage-by-stage approval process combined with regular measurements of every critical factor; from time and money spent to the success of new products and services in the market".

It is further indicated that innovation by organisations is achieved through formal research and development, as well as through less formal on-the-job modifications, exchange of knowledge by experts, and personal experiences.

This innovation usually occurs as a result of a team effort. Teams within the CTL continuously look for new ways of integrating technology into teaching and learning

Innovation through formal research and development: One driver to organizational innovation

The Scholarship of Blended Learning project commenced at the end of 2012 at the CTL which aims to drive formal research in teaching and learning. New developments in the field of integrating technology into teaching and learning practices are given primary consideration and used as point of departure in conducting research. As research and best practices inform strategic initiatives within the Curriculum Development and Innovation focus area, they also aim to contribute to the knowledge base on blended learning.

The project commenced under the academic leadership of Johannes Cronjé, who is a leading expert in the field of technology in tertiary education in Africa. Presently, he serves as Dean for the Faculty of Informatics and Design at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology in the Western Cape. The project team of CTL Scholars consists of 6 students from the 2013 CTL Scholars group, 9 students from the 2014 group, and 7 students from the 2015 group.

The CTL Scholars project is driven by two main role players. Cronjé visits the CTL Scholars on a bi-monthly basis. During these visits, he conducts writing weekends to guide the scholars in their research; most of the time is spent writing. Additionally, full writing weeks are organized on a bi-annual basis. Cronjé is available throughout the duration of these visits in a consulting capacity. These writing weekends and weeks grant upcoming researchers the opportunity to collaborate with their peers and focus on their degrees and research. The other role-player is a CTL team consisting of Danila Liebenberg, Tiana van der Merwe and Francois Strydom.

Innovation through expert knowledge exchange: Another driver to organizational innovation

The CTL sought to promote "exchange of knowledge by experts" by hosting Robert Branch. He is professor of Learning, Design and Technology at the University of Georgia and the head of the department of Career and Information Studies.

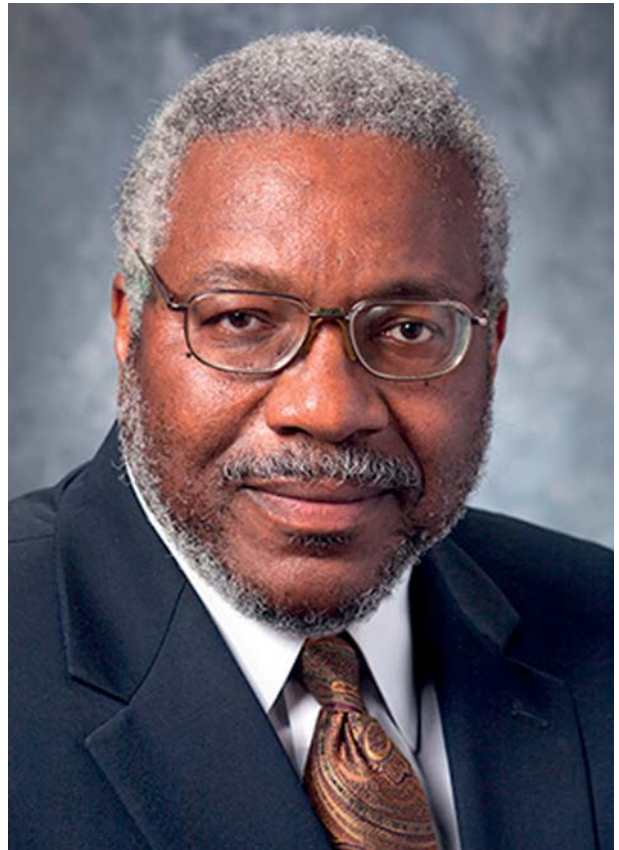**Robert Branch: University of Georgia College of Education**

The aim of the visit by Branch was to develop internal capacity towards innovation in learning design and development. He presented a series of workshops on Instructional Design during the week-long course.

In his first workshop on the *Principles of Instructional Design*, he described the tenets of a learning space by using an atom as an analogy. Each element in a learning space pulsates: media, content, peers, teachers and students. Each element is connected to one another. The distance between the components fluctuates. At different times, different elements revolve around the nucleus, which is the student. The strength of each pair-wise relationship varies over time. Instructional design is a systematic, student-centred, responsive, generative, complex, collaborative, high-fidelity process. He emphasised the practicality of developing education and training programmes in a consistent and reliable fashion.

In his next workshop, *Designing Effective Instructional Strategies,* he dicussed the themes that shape online learning environments namely: collaboration, connectivity, student-centredness, virtual reality, communities, exploration, shared knowledge, multi-sensory experiences, and authenticity. He proposed active, interactive, situated, authentic, and case-based action-learning strategies.

In the *Authentic Assessment* workshop, Branch referenced fellow scholar, Daniel Shufflebeam "The purpose of evaluation is to improve rather than prove". Therefore, instructional designers use evaluation for the specific purpose of improving the designed instruction, in order to reduce the performance gap.

Visitors and colleagues from external institutions joined the workshop; about 40 participants per session from the UFS, CUT, and other universities were in attendance. As a result of these workshops, a memorandum of understanding is being established between the UFS and the University of Georgia in order to conduct collaborative research in the area of instructional design, particularly by arranging inter-institutional supervision for post-graduate students. ∎

Robert Branch, University of Georgia

The Digital Identity Project

Danila Liebenberg

A digital identity is a networked identity that develops in cyberspace and is adopted or claimed online. Individuals, organisations, or electronic devices may all create digital identities.

Introduction

Technology and education are becoming increasingly intertwined. In the digital age, effective harnessing of technology to create environments conducive to learning is an integral part of higher education. Understanding the process of creating appropriate synergies between classroom interaction and use of technology is one of the key challenges faced by those involved in teaching and learning across the globe (Miller, 2013).

Because of the digital identity, signatures, and footprints of 21st century students and academics, the UFS deemed it necessary to investigate the digital identity of its academics and students. One way in which an institution is able to reflect on its position in this arena is to understand student and academic staff experiences and expectations related to the use of technology in the teaching and learning environment. While large pools of information exist, surveys provide practical feedback and give voice to academic staff opinions to aid the institution more effectively in planning and delivering technological solutions for student success.

Purpose of the Digital Identity Project

Two surveys, namely the *Digital Identity of UFS Academic Staff* and the *Digital Identity of UFS Students* were conducted by the CTL from April 2013 to September 2013. These surveys were adopted from the EduCause student surveys and were adjusted for relevance in the South African context. These reports detail the responses of 189 academic staff members and 1984 undergraduate students from the Bloemfontein, Qwaqwa, and South campuses. They covered the following areas:

- Academic staff and student device ownership and use, as well as the importance of these devices for success;
- Academic staff and student experiences and engagement with technology;
- Perceptions of academic staff on student engagement with technology;
- Technology and academic success;
- Technology and career success;
- Mobile devices in teaching and learning;
- Social networking and learning;
- Academic staff and student technology training needs and preferences;
- Evolving learning environments; blended learning and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs);
- Environments conducive to learning; and
- Blackboard.

Digital Identity of UFS Academic Staff 2013 Report

In the *Digital Identity of UFS Academic Staff 2013* report, it is demonstrated that academic staff at the UFS believe that technology elevates the level of teaching, increases academic staff enjoyment of a module, helps academic staff to achieve their lecturing goals, and contributes to their career development. The majority also believe that the use of technology in teaching and learning increases active student participation and their motivation to learn.

Herewith quotes from academic staff' responses:

"Students get more actively involved in modules that use technology."

"Students are motivated to learn in modules that use technology."

"By the time they graduate, the technology I have used in my modules will have adequately prepared students for the workplace."

However, it must be considered that roughly 40% of the respondents are of the opinion that students tend to skip classes if module materials are made available online.

On the contrary, students' responses regarding the extent to which technology impacted on their engagement with their learning and the extent to which technology enabled positive academic outcomes, differed from the responses of some academics. A summary of their responses is graphically depicted in Figure 1:
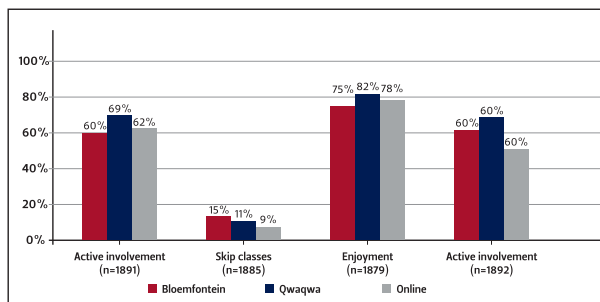

Figure 1: Student participation and engagement

Academics indicated that they frequently used electronic platforms for academic communication. They viewed Blackboard as being crucial to their teaching and most respondents made use of the learning management system (LMS) in the period under review; Blackboard was frequently used for academic communication. In terms of the implementation of new technology in future teaching and learning activities, the results inducated that it would be well-accepted by academics. This was based on the perception of the majority of academic staff, who felt comfortable with technology and welcomed the increased use thereof in the teaching and learning environment in the future.

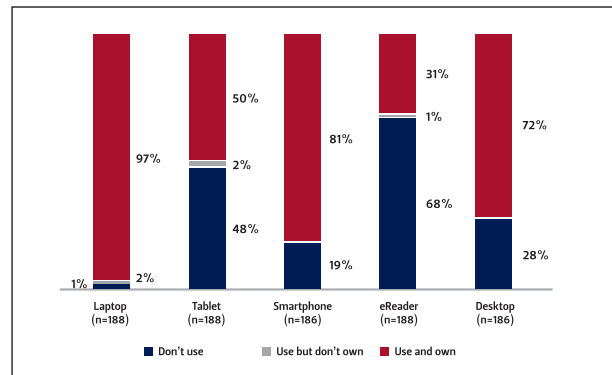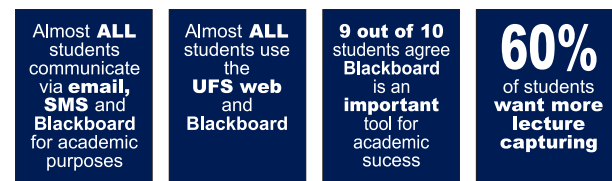The UFS academic staff also indicated their device ownership and use, which is portrayed in Table 2:

Table 2: UFS staff device ownership and use

Digital Identity of UFS Students 2013 Report

The *Digital Identity of UFS Students 2013* report highlighted that electronic communication is important to students and repeatedly confirmed this need.

Infographic 1: Importance of electronic communication to students

The student respondents saw themselves as being comfortable with technology. Furthermore, they welcomed the increased use of technology in the teaching and learning environment. Students indicated that, although they were at ease with technology, it was important for them to receive adequate training in technological applications and devices that they thought would be used in their educational environments.

Most online student respondents owned multiple internet-capable devices such as desktops, laptops, smartphones, e-Readers, and tablets, and indicated that they used these for academic purposes. Students confirmed their identity as the Google Generation by indicating that they relied on Google as their first site of reference to learn more about a topic.
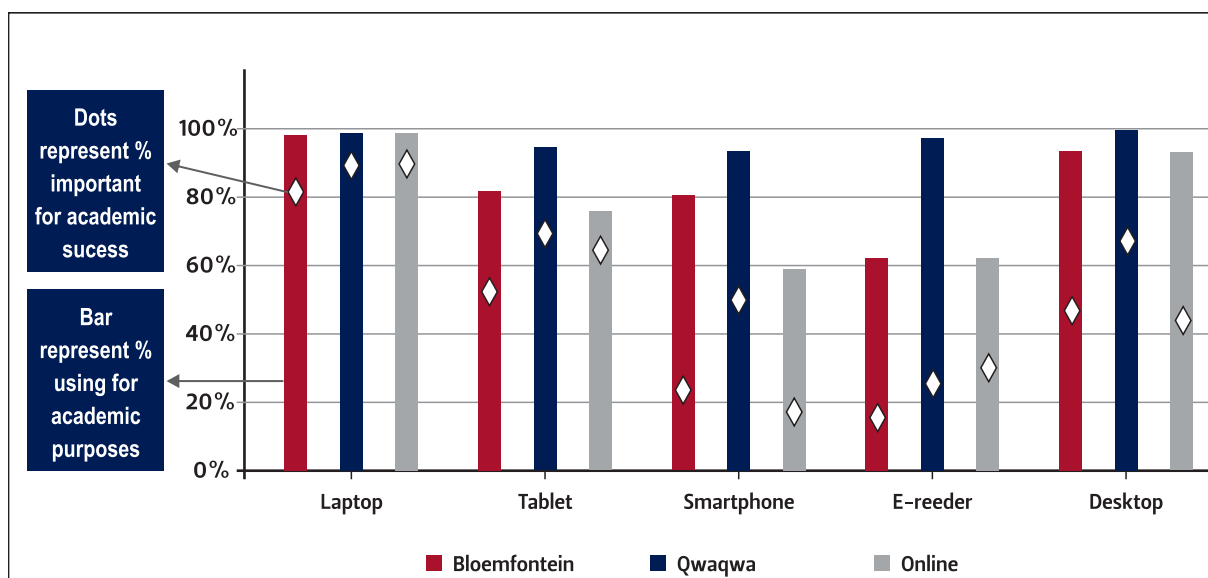
Figure 3: Percentage of students using devices for academic purposes and indicating devices as important for academic success

Value of the Digital Identity Project

The value of the Digital Identity project lies in the production of data, with regards to the use and importance of technological applications and devices at the UFS. The data can be used to create the appropriate synergies between classroom interaction and the use of technology. The value of this project is also vested in the two pertinent groups that were considered and interviewed, namely the UFS academic staff and UFS students. Representativeness was ensured by questioning staff and students from all three campuses of the UFS. The data enables the institution to reflect on student and staff experiences and expectations related to the use of technology in the teaching and learning environment, and enables the institution to better plan and deliver technological solutions for student success.

Value for UFS e-Infrastructure Planning

E-Infrastructure planning relies heavily upon the feedback received from staff and students in terms of their technology use, experience, and needs. In addition, it is very important that focus groups, surveys, and data collection are conducted at the institution itself, because its e-Infrastructure needs are unique compared to those of other South African universities. Furthermore, the e-Infrastructure needs of universities in Africa differ significantly from global universities.

Conclusion

"We are in the throes of a transition," Bill Gates said, "where every publication has to think of their digital strategy". Higher education is confronted by disruptive technological change; therefore, education innovators must think about digital identities and strategies. ■

E-assessment:
Exciting avenues for teaching and learning

Anneri Meintjes

Electronic Teaching and Learning Environment Project (ETALE)

In 2012, the CTL, in collaboration with ICT services, launched the Electronic Teaching and Learning Environment Project (ETALE). The need for this project originated from the renewed international focus on teaching and learning, the rapid growth of new technologies, and the need to be a competitive institution of learning.

A two-year project on both national and international trends in the use of technology in teaching and learning was implemented, and the digital profile and teaching and learning needs of staff and students at the institution were researched. The ETALE project consists of the following five components:

- Determining the digital identity of staff and students;
- Focus groups with faculties and support services;
- An evaluation of Blackboard as institutional Learning Management System (LMS);
- An analysis of ICT infrastructure and systems; and
- International and national benchmarking.

The five phases of the project yielded valuable insights into the needs and behaviour of faculty and students towards the integration of technology in teaching and learning at the institution. As such, seven key drivers were found to be integral to the design of a new ETALE project:

- Harvesting the potential of open and distance learning;
- The history of LMS at the institution;
- Recognising assessment as a critical component of teaching and learning;

- The need for integration between key institutional ICT systems;
- Managing the risk associated with technology in teaching and learning;
- The increasing importance of learning analytics and its potential towards student throughput and success; and
- The changing digital profile of students requiring mobile and instant access.

Why e-assessment?

In recognising assessment as a critical component of teaching and learning, as well as acknowledging the need to enable academics and students to move towards a 21st century teaching and learning environment, it was recommended that the UFS deploy an e-assessment system.

Technology is progressively being incorporated in assessment practices within higher education. The increasing popularity of e-assessment, which includes both computer-based and computer-assisted assessment, can be attributed to the many advantages it provides. These advantages include time and cost savings in terms of grading, quick accessibility to results, and automatic record keeping for item analysis[1].

Moreover, given the benefits of formative assessment such as: clarifying expectations, providing feedback to students to help them realign their work to what is required of them to be successful, and improved academic achievement, there is a growing need for formative assessment practices at higher education institutions[2]. Formative assessments are, however, not always practical in large classes due to the time it takes to grade and provide feedback to

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1   Terzis, V. & Economides, A. (2011). The acceptance and use of computer based assessment. Computers & Education, 56(4), 1032–1044. doi:10.1016/j.compedu.2010.11.017.

students. By employing an e-assessment system, regular formative assessment tasks can be incorporated into a module allowing students the flexibility to complete them at a time and place which is convenient for them. In addition, customised feedback can be provided to students immediately upon completion of a task.

Towards the implementation of e-assessment practices at the UFS

Based on the recommendation of the ETALE project and considering the exciting possibilities e-assessment holds for innovation in teaching and learning practices, the UFS has invested in the deployment of Questionmark, an e-assessment system used worldwide for computer-based and computer-assisted assessment.

The CTL, in collaboration with ICT Services and faculties, will pilot Questionmark in 2014 and 2015. A phased approach will be taken to gather sufficient input from all stakeholders and to establish a clear workflow in order to ensure the efficacy of the system in the UFS context. The UFS is collaborating with the University of Pretoria, which has more than twenty years of experience in e-assessment practices, as part of the implementation of this project. It is hoped that this collaboration will assist in reducing the growing pains associated with implementing a new system.

The first task leading up to the implementation of Questionmark has been to map the current e-assessment practices at the UFS to determine at what level the university is in terms of e-assessment, in order to allow for sufficient planning for the way forward.

Of the 1412 modules on Blackboard[3] that were analysed, a total of 457 (32%) used some form of e-assessment. E-assessment options on Blackboard include: tests or quizzes, assignments, Turnitin assignments, graded discussions, and journals. The Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences has used e-assessment most extensively with 66% of the modules in this faculty having been registered on Blackboard and incorporating some form of e-assessment. Turnitin for assignments is the most popular e-assessment activity on Blackboard. A total of 329 modules (72% of the modules in which e-assessment was used) made use of Turnitin. Furthermore, of those modules that made use of tests or quizzes (100 modules), 85% included multiple choice type questions, and 40% included true or false type questions.

It is useful to know that only 32% of the modules that were registered on Blackboard actually made use of e-assessment. This means that 68%, which can be considered as the vast majority of modules registered on Blackboard, had not made use of the e-assessment options Blackboard offers. Further questions raised by this analysis include:

- What makes Turnitin assignments such a popular e-assessment activity? and
- Why are question types other than multiple choice and true and false not used more frequently in tests or quizzes?

This information provides a foundation for discussions with faculties to better understand the results of the analysis and to gather their general views on e-assessment in order to plan for the implementation of Questionmark as an e-assessment system at the UFS. ■

2   Miller, T. (2009). Formative computer-based assessment in higher education: the effectiveness of feedback in supporting student learning. Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 34(2), 181–192. doi:10.1080/02602930801956075.

3   First semester 2014 modules, including South campus and Qwaqwa campus modules, were included in the analysis.

ACADEMIC STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Excellence in teaching and learning

Marissa Grobbelaar

Excellence in Teaching and Learning is about giving recognition to academic achievement and encouraging innovation. The purpose of such an event is not only to share best practise, but also to raise the profile of Teaching and Learning at the UFS.

The Innovation Awards and Vice-Chancellor's Awards provide academics with an opportunity to showcase and be recognised for their innovative teaching and learning practices and their dedication to their students' success. The entries for the Innovation Awards are showcased at a one-day event, and the winners for the different categories are announced at a prestigious breakfast with the Vice-Rector Academic. Invited academics along with the nominees for the Teaching and Learning Awards are invited as a way of recognising and celebrating their commitment to their teaching practice.

At this event, academics can also visit the showcase which features various teaching and learning topics, tools, and techniques that could benefit the computer savvy and challenged alike. These include: teaching and engagement methods; available academic support services, such as SASSE and the CTL resource centre; and a full team ready to demonstrate e-learning tools and the latest trends in higher education technologies. Workshops are hosted on topics ranging from student engagement, discussions on Universal Design for Learning, blended learning, and flipping the classroom.

The Winners for the Excellence in Teaching and Learning Awards

2013

Vice-Chancellor's Award

- Aliza le Roux
  Natural and Agricultural Sciences, Qwaqwa campus

Innovation Awards

– Innovative methods of engagement and learning

- Hannes Coetser
  Health Sciences, Bloemfontein campus
- Lea Konig
  Natural and Agricultural Sciences, Qwaqwa campus

– Innovative technology in the classroom

- Schalk Schoombie
  Natural and Agricultural Sciences, Bloemfontein campus
- Christa De Wet Faber
  Natural and Agricultural Sciences, Qwaqwa campus

– Innovative methods of curriculum design and delivery

- Angelique van Niekerk
  Humanities, Bloemfontein campus
- Fred Mudavanhu
  Natural and Agricultural Sciences, Qwaqwa campus

– Innovative methods of service learning

- Lindie Coetzee
  Humanities, Bloemfontein campus

– Excellence in the advancement of student learning

- Emile Bredenhand
  Natural and Agricultural Sciences, Qwaqwa campus

2014

Vice-Chancellor's Award

- Madelein Koning
  Health Sciences, Bloemfontein campus

Innovation Awards

Bloemfontein campus

– Adding value: Engagement and student learning

- Naquita Achadinha
  Economic and Management Sciences

– Innovation and collaboration: Curriculum design

- Rina Meintjes
  Natural and Agricultural Sciences

– Changing the norm: Assessment practices

- Botma Visser
  Natural and Agricultural Sciences

– Teaching is caring: Student support

- Pierre de Villiers and Elzmarie Oosthuizen
  Natural and Agricultural Sciences

Qwaqwa campus

– Sharing the results of my TL research

- Lea Koenig
  Natural and Agricultural Sciences

– Secrets of my success in teaching…

- Emile Bredenhand
  Natural and Agricultural Sciences

– Decoding my discipline

- Marga Stander
  Centre for Teaching and Learning

– Departmental proposal

- Memory Mphaphuli
  Humanities

HELTASA–CHE National Excellence in Teaching and Learning Awards

UFS academics are also being awarded for their excellent teaching on national platforms. Philemon Akach is one such example who received the award for Leader in the field of Teaching and Learning in 2013, recognising his role and commitment to sign language awareness nationally, his active role in the deaf community and his involvement in committees and forums that seek to protect the rights of the deaf culture.

As in the case of most academics entering for awards or some sort of recognition, Philemon Akach approached it with humility: "*Well I don't know if anything I do would really merit an award, but I was nominated, so someone must believe I am doing something of value.*" Akach is the dead of department of South African Sign Language (SASL)at the UFS. He is a renowned expert in sign language who has designed the undergraduate SASL curriculum at the UFS, which he also teaches. He helped coordinate the development of the SASL curriculum that will soon be offered as a school subject to Grade 0-12 learners in all 42 schools for persons who are deaf in South Africa.

Three academics within the UFS have received a National Excellence in Teaching and Learning Award, they are:

- 2009 – Adri Beylefeld: Education,
- 2011 – Liezel Nel: Natural and Agricultual Sciences, and
- 2013 – Philemon Akach: Humanities.

Annually, two nominees per university are entered into the National Excellence in Teaching and Learning Awards and five winners are announced at the annual HELTASA National Conference. ■
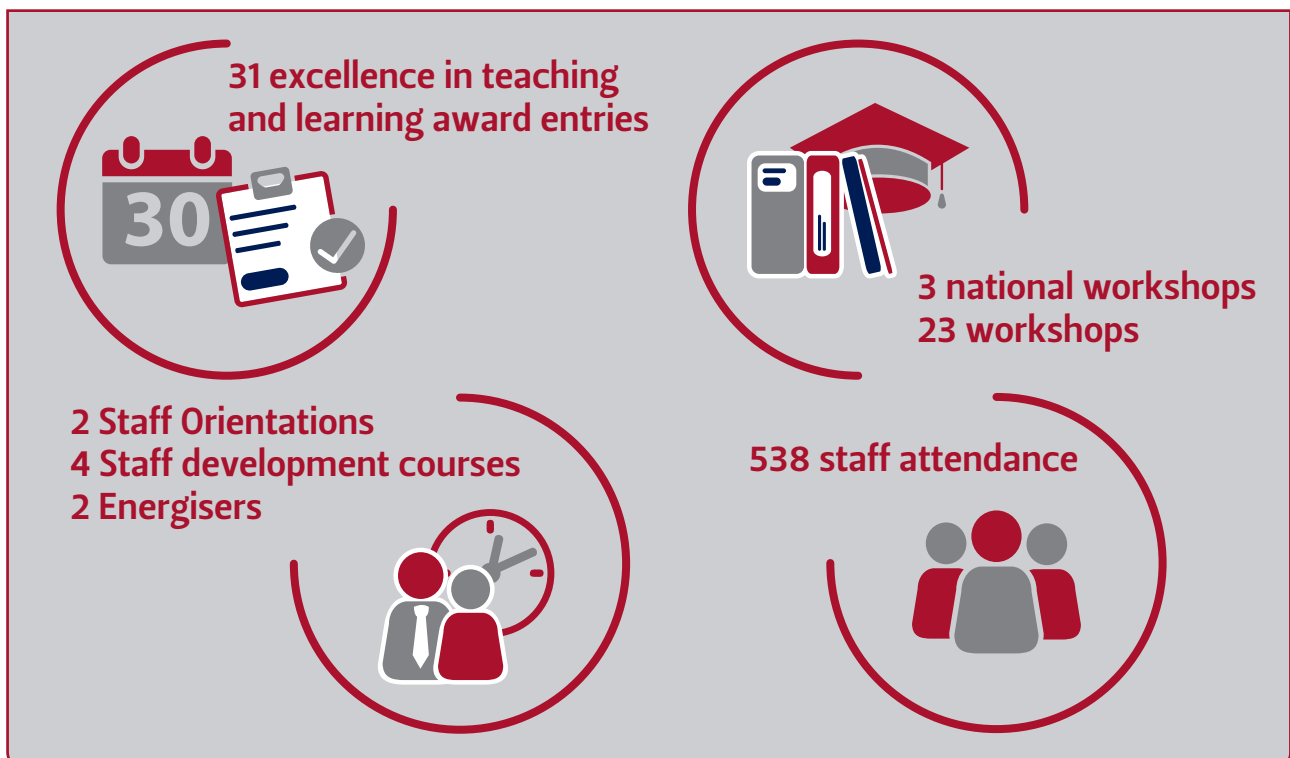
Academic Staff Development:
Creating innovative spaces

Marissa Grobbelaar

The focus area Academic Staff Development (ASD) was created to address the needs of academic staff regarding professional development and to meet teaching and learning development requirements. In pursuit of this objective, ASD endeavours to bring academics something of value, something they can retain and use long after the workshop is over, and something that excites them – something they'll remember.

2014 in numbers

31 excellence in teaching and learning award entries

3 national workshops
23 workshops

2 Staff Orientations
4 Staff development courses
2 Energisers

538 staff attendance

Jonathan Jansen

Geo Quinot

Lynette Van Der Merwe

Energisers by Experts

Energisers take the form of a lunchtime workshop on hot topics related to teaching and learning, hosted by guest speakers thus far including Maggie Verster and. Geo Quinot. Verster is an expert in teaching with social media and an innovator and trendsetter regarding Twitter for the classroom. Her passion extends far beyond what you see in person and her Twitter profile (https://twitter.com/maggiev) is buzzing with success stories, tips, and tools for implementing e-learning. Geo Quinot, from Stellenbosch University, is also a postgraduate student at the UFS and is passionate about finding new ways to support students in their learning. He shared the trials and tribulations of using podcasting in teaching. His research study proved the benefit of showing a simple video to explain a difficult concept.

Quinot related that, on average, students listen to the podcasts as much as four times, allowing for better learning and understanding.

Academic Staff Orientation

The orientation of new academic staff members was the first opportunity to prove the impact that academic staff development can have at an institution. The two-day programme is filled with sessions presented by UFS leaders and academics, along with winners from previous years' Excellence in Teaching and Learning awards, and staff from the CTL. The new academics are familiarised with the UFS structure and policies and are provided with valuable tools in terms of good teaching practice through the expertise and experience of the various presenters.

To encourage involvement and to create a vibrant atmosphere, orientation is planned according to a theme like Kick-off Laduuuma as a metaphor for kick-starting a new career or Road to the Oscars where each presenter had a movie title related to the topic of their presentation as theme for their session. The idea behind the Oscars theme was that academics would be able to generate points by attending the orientation sessions and other interventions to win free registration to HELTASA 2014, which will be hosted at the UFS.

Staff in attendance referred to the orientation as informative and expressed an eagerness for more support measures such as these.

Assess, design, and teach

The ASD focus area wants to support staff in designing, assessing, and facilitating their courses while following innovative practices. Three staff development courses

are offered in collaboration with outstanding facilitators who excel in particular areas of teaching and learning. The facilitators helped develop and present the course which aims to provide academics with practical knowledge for application in their teaching by following best practice and well-established research on the particular topic. *Assess your Course* was the first of these courses and is facilitated by Noreen McPherson, Master HR Practitioner: Learning & Development. This course takes into account the University's assessment policy and provides hands-on advice and practical ways to conduct assessments, while ensuring at all times that they are pitched at the correct level. The value of designing a proper rubric is also dealt with. *Design your Course* is facilitated by Liezel Nel from Natural and Agricultural Sciences and follows best practice for curriculum design, along with advice based on Nel's experience with the model. Attendees have the opportunity to set up a facilitation plan for a unit of one of their modules and to start devising outcomes and an assessment strategy

aligned to the outcomes for the chosen unit. The course lasts four weeks with regular input from the facilitator on the course participants' developing facilitation plans. *Teach your Course* was facilitated by Joe Serekoane from Humanities. An anthropologist at heart, Serekoane facilitates discussion on teaching pedagogies and aims to equip attendees with an educational toolbox. The focus is on facilitating engagement in the classroom by knowing who our students are, identifying our personal teaching styles, and choosing the teaching and learning strategies that provides the best learning experience.

ASD is gaining momentum with every intervention in order to provide academic staff with experience that improves and complements their teaching and learning practices, to be a contact point for teaching and learning requests, and to induce excitement and provide recognition for new and innovative teaching and learning practices at the UFS. ∎

Infusing international expertise

Marissa Grobbelaar

The CTL made use of the opportunity of hosting HELTASA 2014 to invite international experts to share their knowledge institutionally and nationally. Workshop participants were able to benchmark and evaluate how international best practise could be adapted to the South African context.

Decoding the Disciplines

David Pace from Indiana University facilitated workshops with the Learning in Law group on Decoding the Disciplines, sharing with academics from the UFS and nationally the impact this reflective model can have on the way we teach, as well as implications for teaching and learning-related research.

Instructional design

Robert Branch with Jonathan Jansen. Branch, professor of learning, design, and technology at the University of Georgia visited the UFS as part of the series of HELTASA pre-events and led workshops on the instructional design process with emphasis on the ADDIE model.

The classroom as an organization

Roger Putzel presenting a seminar on "ethnic engagement amongst students: no venue better than the classroom". Putzel also focused on the dynamics of second language learning.
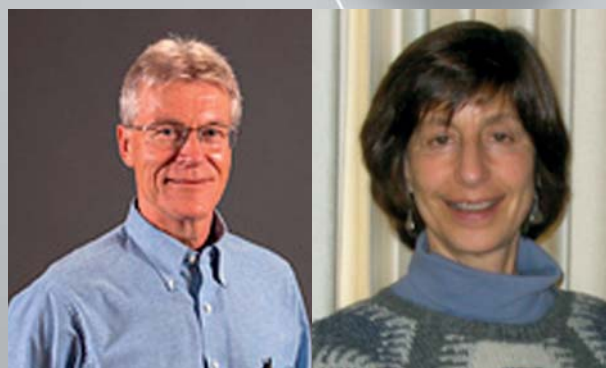
Leadership in higher education

Allyn Shaw, Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs at Michigan State University led a series of working sessions regarding leadership development at higher education institutions. Shaw shared best practice for succession, planning, or creating a talent pipeline and provided an opportunity for faculty management to analyse current leadership strategies.

Academic advising

Charlie Nutt, Executive Director of NACADA situated at Kansas State University facilitated academic advising workshops by leading conversations to promote student success at the UFS and nationally.

Second language teaching and learning

William Grabe and Fredricka Stoller from Northern Arizona University are leading experts in academic literacy, second language teaching and learning, and reading and writing development. They will present various workshops on second language reading and writing development as part of the pre-conference proceedings for the HELTASA National Conference during 2014. ■

The team facilitating teaching and learning in faculties

Francois Strydom

Historian Alfred Chandler proposed that structure should follow strategy. The CTL has identified the development of faculty-specific approaches to teaching and learning as one of its six strategic objectives. Therefore, we have actively worked with a team of deeply committed teaching and learning managers who are based in faculties. These experts provide invaluable insights into how the CTL can continue to meet the needs of staff and students. The quotations below provide a glimpse of the diversity of perspectives which enrich teaching and learning thinking at the UFS.

Elzmarie Oosthuizen – Natural and Agricultural Sciences

To teach is to learn twice and to teach is to change lives forever. That can only happen if you use a toolbox full of teaching styles. I enjoy developing my own teaching toolbox and like to inspire others to develop their skills. I have a passion for teaching because through that we can change the world. Remember, the mediocre teacher tells, the good teacher explains, the superior teacher demonstrates, and the great teacher inspires. -William Arthur Ward

Jackie Storer – Humanities

The best way to change a world is to open peoples' hearts and minds through education. Hearts and minds have to be captured through engaging pedagogy – that's why I am involved in teaching and learning!

Kelebogile Thomas Resane – Theology

As a person with an obligation to empower people, I am excited by the opportunity to fulfil this calling at the UFS. My passion here at CTL, and especially in the Faculty of Theology, has been enhanced by cooperation between the faculty members, the incorporation of new ideas, and the orientation that provides the faculty with support for exploring and implementing eaching and learning practices that enhance the teaching and learning environment.

Manie Moolman – Law

Tell me and I forget. Teach me, and I remember. Involve me, and I learn. -Benjamin Franklin

Sonet Kruger – Health Sciences

It is my passion to develop, mentor, and support students as well as academics with regard to teaching and learning.

Adri Beylefeld – Education

It is my view that if the changed context of higher education demands that subject knowledge should be supported with generic skills required for successful learning and future employment, then assessment should demand those skills to be achieved and demonstrated.

Corlia Janse van Vuuren

Teaching and learning changes lives and that is where I love to be - where lives are positively changed! ◼

The Finish Line:
Exploring new ways of communicating data

Marissa Grobbelaar & Lana Swart

When last did you hear an academic say: "I had fun at work today?"
Why should students have all the fun at university?

The idea to represent student engagement data through means of a board game was inspired by Finish Line, a game played at DREAM 2014 which was hosted by Achieving the Dream.

The Finish Line is a board game developed specifically using student engagement data from the following surveys:

- South African Survey of Student Engagement (SASSE);
- Lecturer Survey of Student Engagement (LSSE);
- Beginning University Survey of Student Engagement (BUSSE); and
- Classroom Survey of Student Engagement (CLASSE).

The objective of the game is to give players a glimpse into the lives of students at South African higher education institutions; to help players realise how a variety of events help or hinder students on their way to graduation.

How the game works

Progression through the game, either forward or backward, is determined by Life Events or Life Cards. Some events are caused by the students' own behaviour or decisions, and others are the result of factors beyond students' control. The game can be played with two to six players. and each student starts off with the same chance of graduating first, but the roll of the dice and random drawing of cards show that life is seldom fair. There are also Exemption Spaces in each corner of the board which allow the players to draw an Exemption Card. These cards present students with special opportunities to move forward, for instance: earning

distinctions, receiving grants to study abroad, making it into an honour society, or receiving a merit bursary.

The student experience:

Before the game starts, players draw one of six cards containing a character biography. The players are encouraged to assume the persona of the student in whose shoes they are placed. The student profiles were created to represent students in different fields of study and with different personality types. This helps players to be immersed in the life of a student by stepping out of what they know and seeing afresh the challenges students encounter. Most Life Events are assigned either a positive or a negative score according to which players can move on the board, but some Life Events are left open to discussion, and the players have to determine the true effect an event would have on the student and agree on whether that student moves forward or back- and by how many spaces.

Data-driven approach

The experiences listed on The Finish Line's Life Cards, while globally benchmarked, are typical of South African students. Rigorous testing has identified several student engagement themes, and under each theme, indicators and high-impact practices describe important aspects relating to educational quality. The positive or negative scores allocated to each experience provide an indication of the degree to which these experiences actually hinder or help students. The themes are divided as follows:

- Academic challenge
    - Higher-order learning
    - Reflective or integrative learning
    - Quantitative reasoning
    - Learning strategies
- Learning with peers
    - Collaborative learning
    - Discussions with diverse others
- Experiences with staff
    - Student-staff interaction
    - Teaching practices
- Campus environment
    - Quality of interactions
    - Supportive environment
- High-impact practices

Gamification of learning is a concept that is being increasingly expored in education, and gamification of data is a unique way to share research in a meaningful way and to impact on teaching and learning practices. The creation of this game has been applauded by international associations, such as Achieving the Dream as well as several national institutions where it has been used to illustrate the power of using contextually driven data to help institutions make decisions about enabling student success. ∎