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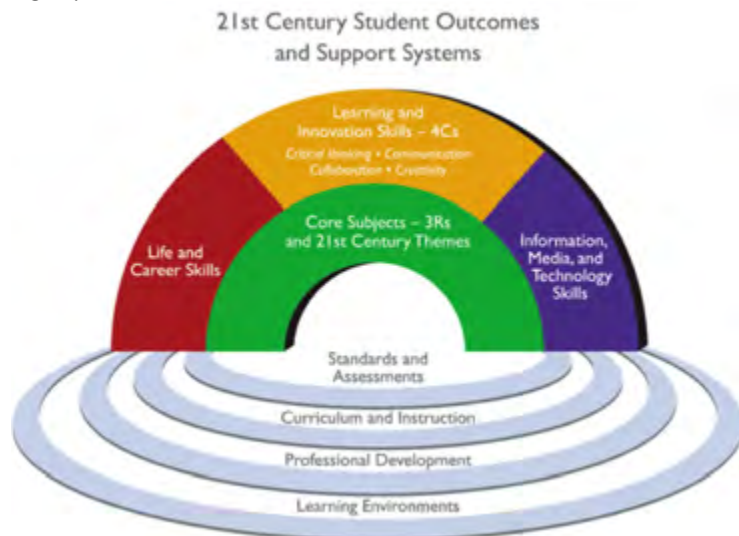
# Empowering Students To Thrive In The 21st Century

Beata M. Jones

Information Systems and Supply Chain Management

## The World of Constant Change

In the video [Shift Happens](#), we learn how we are preparing young men and women for careers not yet imagined, where they will make use of technologies not yet invented, and how some of the knowledge students learn in college is going to be outdated before they graduate. To respond to the reality of constant change in the 21st century, many voices outside of teaching and learning environments have been promoting the need to innovate in education. One such organization, the [Partnership for 21st Century Skills](#), founded by Apple, Cisco, Ford and Walt Disney among others, created a [Framework for 21st Century Learning](#) that focuses on fusing in the classroom the traditional 3Rs with the 4Cs (Critical thinking and problem solving, Communication, Collaboration, Creativity and Innovation) within a holistic framework:



K-12 teachers across different grades and subjects have been using intentional approaches to nurture a new generation of thinkers, emphasizing the 21st century skills. So what happens when these students enter TCU? Do they continue to be nurtured by learning environments we create or are they facing the traditional classrooms in which the teaching paradigm still prevails?

## Traditional Teaching Paradigm in the Classroom

In a traditional classroom, the professor teaches and thus transfers most of the information worth knowing to the student, based on the assigned reading, with some class discussion ensuing. The video [A Vision of Students Today](#) portrays the effectiveness of this approach, which often results in the “[I am worried about my grade](#)” type of student -- unmotivated and lacking passion for his or her studies. The traditional teaching environment assumes that students can remain engaged in an environment where the teacher does most of the talking. Universities built this environment on the premise that the pool of relevant knowledge remains unchanged for some length of time. While some concepts certainly will remain relevant for years to come, the pool of new ideas coming into existence every day is increasing exponentially. Thus, we should make sure we train students not only in our core discipline (the 3Rs) and in the new learning and innovation skills (the 4Cs), but that we also help them find relevant, up-to-date ideas and frameworks to address their heir problems, accurately assessing the worth of information they find.

## New Learning Paradigm in the Classroom

Unlike the teaching paradigm, the new learning paradigm assumes that learning occurs both inside and outside the boundaries of the physical classroom. This paradigm assumes that students, teachers, and information influence each other and allow each to grow beyond the disciplinary knowledge. With the new learning paradigm, the teacher becomes a

learning designer and a coach in the classroom, and the technology provides access to a wealth of information/ support structures that the student can use in the peer-to-peer learning process. The learning classroom gives faculty the ability to focus not only on the 3Rs of the disciplines, but also on the 4Cs that are cross-disciplinary and critical to the 21st century education.

If you would like to consider changing from a traditional classroom to a learning classroom that supports 21st Century Student Outcomes, here are some ideas to consider.

1) Assign reading, research, speaker events, and/or video lectures for homework. Use class time to work in groups on assignments that assume familiarity with the assigned homework material. (This is sometimes referred to as a *flipped* classroom.)

2) For assignments, choose complex problems that students are passionate about. If possible, personalize learning -- have students go through a process of inquiry, posing their own questions that the assignment will answer. If possible, look for opportunities to work on service-learning projects that provide tangible outcomes. If possible, focus students on challenges with a global scope to internationalize mind sets.

3) Promote collaboration -- between groups, between classrooms, with different universities, with professionals -- to make learning social and more rewarding.

4) Incorporate game principles in the design of your classes to encourage student engagement.

5) Build into the curriculum tinkering workshops or labs, where students have opportunities to be creative and make mistakes without incurring penalties.

# KOEHLER EVENTS

C E N T E R

## Target Knows If You're Pregnant: How Data Leads To Personalized Learning

Data analytics means a lot of things to a lot of people, but data must be used within specific contexts to ask the right questions, visualize appropriately, and become actionable by the right persons.

See our [Koehler Events website](#) for more information and to register.

**Thursday, May 2, 2013**  
**11am-1:30pm, Lunch Provided**  
**Kelly Center, Cox C**



Dr. Jeff Borden  
VP of Instruction &  
Academic Strategy,  
Pearson



Dr. Mark Sarver  
President,  
EduKan

- 6) Provide support systems to help students master the multidimensional skills required of them. For example:
- a. Connect with a reference librarian in your discipline to help with research and with the assessment of information reliability
  - b. Connect with career services to learn about professional development opportunities for your students and build these opportunities into your class
  - c. Require students to have the [writing center](#) review written assignments
  - d. Conduct a team building workshop at the beginning of the semester and utilize peer evaluations at the end of term; Give each team five-minute opportunities to reflect on the group process during the course of the semester
  - e. Leverage the diverse features of the learning management system and other technology tools to support the 3Rs and the 4Cs of your course
- 7) Provide frequent feedback that allows students to see how they are improving.

## Conclusion

TCU's Academic Affairs Master Plan contains proposals for academic enhancements that include the "support for a culture of innovation, engagement, and emphasis on developing programs that anticipate and respond to major societal challenges facing the region, nation and the world." As we get ready for the *Academy of Tomorrow* that Provost Donovan has been discussing in recent months, we need to think how we as faculty can respond in our classrooms to these major developments and support the strategic initiatives of the university. Intellectual Commons will provide

us with new learning spaces that foster student engagement and collaboration, offering the physical infrastructure to support paradigm change. Ultimately, graduating empowered ethical leaders and responsible citizens in the *dynamic and global knowledge-economy* of the 21st century is our goal.



## Reflections on "Reacting to the Past" in the Classroom

Mark Dennis  
Religion

I was first introduced to "Reacting to the Past" (RTTP) while teaching as an adjunct professor at Gustavus Adolphus College, a small liberal arts college in southern Minnesota. Two friends—one in Political Science and the other in Religion—had recommended it to me as a creative and engaging way to teach students about the past. Although I was unable to participate in a [RTTP conference](#) while teaching in Minnesota, I received a TCU Instructional Development Grant to attend the annual conference held at Barnard College in New York in June 2008.

Mark Carnes, a professor of American History, developed RTTP at Barnard and it has grown into an organized program that sponsors the annual national conference on the Barnard campus and regional conferences. RTTP has published some ten "[games](#)" with another twenty-five or so in [development](#).

The program's web site describes RTP as follows:

In most classes students learn by receiving ideas and information from instructors and texts, or they discuss such materials in seminars. "Reacting to the Past" courses employ a different pedagogy. Students learn by taking on roles, informed by classic texts, in elaborate games set in the past; they learn skills—speaking, writing, critical thinking, problem solving, leadership, and teamwork—in order to prevail in difficult and complicated situations. That is because Reacting roles, unlike those in a play, do not have a fixed script and outcome. While students will be obliged to adhere to the philosophical and intellectual beliefs of the historical figures they have been assigned to play, they must devise their own means of expressing those ideas persuasively, in papers, speeches or other public presentations; and students must also pursue a course of action they think will help them win the game.

At Barnard and other institutions that have adopted the pedagogy, a typical RTP course will include three games that take up an entire semester. In the Liberal Arts Honors Program at the University of Texas-Austin, for example, students have the option of enrolling in two RTP sections for Spring 2012, each of which used three published games: *The Threshold of Democracy: Athens in 403 B.C.*; *Confucianism and the Succession Crisis of the Wan-li Emperor, 1587 A.D.*; and *Rousseau, Burke, and the Revolution in France, 1791*. Larry Carver, a Professor in UT's English Department and Director of the Honors program, is a regular and dedicated Reacting participant who facilitates the India game at the annual conference.

As part of these courses, students read a "game book" that describes the context of widely varied historical events: the Council of Nicea, the trial of Galileo, and the Trail of

Tears, as well as the American Civil Rights movement, the struggle for Palestine, and the development of Athenian democracy. During a game, students engage in various sorts of activities: they'll read the speeches of Mahatma Gandhi and Muhammad Ali Jinnah about an independent India, the views of Nelson Mandela and Stephen Biko on the injustice of Apartheid and future of South Africa, or the teachings of Confucius and Mencius about the proper role of the Son of Heaven in China. Students then take on specific roles in the game as outlined in their individual role sheets and are required to do primary research, write position papers, negotiate and debate with other students and their factions, and give public speeches. RTP thus requires students to practice an array of intellectual and social skills, including working as a team to pursue a set of shared objectives. For example, in the India game a student could be assigned to a faction representing the interests of the British, the Untouchables, Gandhi and Nehru's Congress Party, Jinnah's Muslim League, the Sikhs, the Communists, rural India, or the so-called "princely states."

Since attending the 2008 workshop—I've been back in 2011 and 2012—I have taught the India game each semester in World Religions and once in Religion and Violence. The India game, written by Ainslie Embree (Professor of History Emeritus at Columbia University and former president of the Association of Asian Studies) and Mark Carnes, recreates the conditions leading up to Partition in 1947 when the subcontinent was divided into India and Pakistan. Students are required to study and then apply primary source material from the game book titled *Defining a Nation: India on the Eve of Independence-1945, Sources of Indian Tradition, The Bhagavad Gita*, and other materials in negotiations and debate at a conference in the Indian city of Shimla that will determine the shape of an independent India. And while some students are assigned major speaking roles, others are given supporting roles, and others yet are asked to serve as reporters, web site designers, and



videographers—roles that I have added because the World Religions class with 35 to 40 students is larger than a typical RTP course. While all students must read the background materials and take the same quizzes and exams, this division of labor enables them to participate in ways that resonate with their individual learning styles. And while the history of Partition is valuable in itself, it also serves as the context for introducing students to more recent events, such as the conflict between India and Pakistan over the disputed territory of Kashmir, the destruction of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya by Hindu nationalists, and the Mumbai attacks of 2008.

I have also used a game set in China's Ming dynasty (1368-1644) in my upper-level East Asian Religions course. That game, titled *Confucianism and the Succession Crisis of the Wanli Emperor, 1587* focuses on a dispute over imperial succession, pitting Confucian traditionalists against their progressive opponents, each of whom must apply the principles of Confucianism to argue for or against the Son of Heaven's decision to break with the traditional right of primogeniture by naming his third-born son as successor. In the game, one student plays the role of Emperor Wanli, another plays the First Grand Secretary, and the other students are members of the Hanlin Academy—the highest governing body in the land whose ranks are filled with scholars who passed the highest level of the civil service exam.

I've been delighted with the results of these two games, which have generated a lot of enthusiasm among my students—some of whom have come in costumes or broken out Texas-inflected British accents—and taught them a variety of useful critical thinking skills. These two games will also be the focus of an Honors course I am developing with the support of a Cultural Visions grant. If you are interested in learning more about Reacting to the Past, please [attend the workshop](#) advertised on the right side of this page.

# KOEHLER C E N T E R EVENTS

## Reacting to The Past

This workshop will introduce “Reacting to the Past” (RTP), an interdisciplinary and engaging method of inquiry created by Mark Carnes, professor of American history at Barnard College.

See our [Koehler Events website](#) for more information and to register.

**Friday, February 15, 2013, 12:00pm-2:00pm,  
Lunch Provided  
Smith 104B**



Mark Dennis  
Texas Christian  
University



Larry Carver  
The University of  
Texas at Austin

# Promoting Civic Learning and Engagement through Service-Learning



David Aftandilian, Sociology and Anthropology  
Rosangela Boyd, Center for Community Involvement & Service-Learning  
Lyn Dart, Nutritional Sciences

What is the true mission of higher education, beyond teaching students academic skills? That question has been debated in America for decades. In 1947, President Truman's Commission on Higher Education released a report entitled "Higher Education for American Democracy." The report stated that "the first and most essential charge upon higher education is that at all levels and in all its fields of specialization, it shall be the carrier of democratic values, ideals, and process" (1947, Vol. 1, 102).

Six decades later, this same message was voiced again in *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future*, a report commissioned by the Department of Education and released at a White House event in January 2012. Presenting evidence on the anemic civic health of our nation, the report calls for investing in renewing our nation's social, intellectual, and civic capital. It argues that we should not limit the mission of higher education to merely workforce preparation and training, but rather invest in preparing

students to act to strengthen our communities through civic learning. The report states:

Civic learning that includes knowledge, skills, values, and the capacity to work with others on civic and societal challenges can help increase the number of informed, thoughtful, and public-minded citizens well prepared to contribute in the context of the diverse, dynamic, globally connected United States. ([http://www.aacu.org/civic\\_learning/crucible/documents/highlights.pdf](http://www.aacu.org/civic_learning/crucible/documents/highlights.pdf))

According to the report, "just over one-third of college faculty surveyed in 2007 'strongly agreed' that their campus actively promotes awareness of US or global social, political, and economic issues" (p.6). The longer students stay in college, the wider the gap becomes between their endorsement of social responsibility as a goal for college education—which increases throughout four years of college—and their assessment of whether the institution provides opportunities for growth in this area, which decreases between their freshmen and senior years.

In order to equip students with the ability to think and act as responsible citizens, *A Crucible Moment* recommends moving beyond civic education as the domain of certain disciplines and taught exclusively from a theoretical perspective. Instead, it calls on higher education institutions to: foster a **civic ethos** across all parts of campus and educational culture; make civic literacy a core expectation for all students; practice **civic inquiry** across all fields of study; and advance **civic action** through transformative partnerships, at home and abroad.

As part of the recommendations to promote a civic ethos on campus, the report suggests that higher education institutions "delineate multiple educational pathways in the curriculum and co-curriculum that incorporate civic

questions, pedagogies, and practices for all students” (p.36). One of the pedagogical approaches endorsed was service-learning, which is regarded as a powerful curricular tool for promoting multiple dimensions of civic learning and engagement.

In particular, critical service-learning elevates the academic experience by encouraging critical consciousness, “allowing students to combine action and reflection in classroom and community to examine both the historical precedents of the social problems addressed in their service placements and the impact of their personal action/inaction in maintaining and transforming these problems” (Mitchell, 2008, p.34). In addition to course-specific material, learning outcomes include fostering awareness of community strengths and challenges, social and economic diversity and disparities, as well as encouraging students to develop a sense of civic responsibility and the personal and professional skills they will need to effect positive changes in their communities throughout their lives. For example, students working to create a community garden investigate the factors leading to food deserts and partner with community members to devise strategies for ensuring continued access to quality, affordable produce. As students examine the root causes of problems in real life settings and are challenged to work collaboratively to formulate solutions, they learn important lifelong lessons on how to apply their professional knowledge and skills for the betterment of their communities.

Such an approach is also consistent with what employers expect from their workforce today. Data gathered by Hart Research Associates (2010) show that employers want to hire individuals who are not only proficient in technical skill, but also possess skills in critical thinking, analytical reasoning, applied knowledge in real life settings, ethical decision-making, complex problem solving, and intercultural competence; Research studies documenting the benefits of service-learning attest to its effectiveness in promoting desirable learning outcomes such as these (Eyler & Giles,

1999; Astin et al., 2000; Steinke, 2002). Surveys administered each semester at TCU have consistently shown that students credit the service-learning experience with enhancing their cognitive, social and civic skills.

At TCU, service-learning pedagogy has been adopted by faculty members in every college. Whether assisting French-speaking refugees in acclimating to a new life, capturing the oral history of civil rights leaders, or counseling older adults on healthy dietary and lifestyle choices, students are helping create positive change in their communities while also developing into capable professionals and responsible citizens. Through service-learning we can empower students to realize the true democratic mission of higher education.

Sources mentioned in this article can be found on the [References page](#).



## Teacher-Scholar Lab

Friday, February 22, 7:30am-4:30pm

Friday, March 22, 7:30am-4:30pm

We'll offer a one-hour “Service-Learning 101” presentation twice during the day, once at 10:00AM and again at 2:00PM. If you can't make it to the presentation, no worries! Just “drop in” any time the lab is open for information about incorporating Service-Learning in your courses.

**No registration required.**

Find out more on our [workshop page](#).





## Cultivate an Imminent Essential Skill Set: New Media Writing

Gina Hill

Nutritional Sciences / Koehler Center Fellow

Imagine the job interview. A TCU political science graduate sits across from the manager of a firm. Did this student ever imagine that the selling point on her resume, giving her that slight advantage over the other candidates, was the product of a group assignment in her Campaigns and Elections course?

Dr. Joanne Green, Chair of Political Science, is hopeful that the skills learned through an assignment in her POSC 31113 – Campaigns and Elections course are exactly those that students use to market themselves upon graduation. The group assignment has been a component of the course for some time. After substantial research about their candidate, the political climate, and the electorate, as a group, students present their campaign plan. This fall, Dr. Green added an additional component. Each group of students now creates a 30-40 second commercial for their assigned Congressional candidate who is running for election. Students must consider elements such as how the commercial fits into their campaign plan, to whom it is aimed and why, and where the commercial will be shown. After taking part in college and University conversations about creativity surrounding Sir Ken Robinson's talk last spring, Green became convinced that promoting creativity is increasingly important. This served as the catalyst for the addition to the assignment.

Dr. Green doesn't consider herself technologically advanced. She instead describes herself as "technologically

competent." Green developed a short movie on her own before she created this assignment, which assured her that if she was capable of doing so, the majority of her students would be as well. She has relied on the New Media Writing Studio (NMWS) to guide her students in the use of the tools available to develop such a commercial.

The NMWS staff helps faculty across campus incorporate new media into their writing assignments through one-on-one consultations, monthly Cool Tool Brown Bag workshops, and the Digital Writing Group. The Cool Tool workshops are informal meetings where faculty share digital tools for research, writing, and teaching. Faculty may work on their own digital writing projects with friends and colleagues where they can share progress and give and receive feedback in the Digital Writing Group. Instructors from any discipline can gather to work on various types of digital presentations, web design projects, video, infographics, and more. Dr. Curt Rode, the Director of the NMWS, and Joanna Schmidt, Assistant Director of the NMWS, are the staff devoted to the NMWS.

Rode and Schmidt assist faculty who have older assignments they wish to update to include new media writing or to help identify methods to incorporate new media writing into their courses. Additionally they assist faculty in rubric development for these assignments and help faculty and students navigate copyright issues pertaining to digital media. Dr. Rode and Ms. Schmidt also teach students and faculty how to use the tools that may be utilized to create new media writing assignments and encourage them to practice while in the lab. Students and faculty find the tutorials on the NMWS website helpful refreshers as they complete projects. Rode encourages faculty to break projects up into tiered assignments so that students are developing the content throughout the semester. For example, Green requires that students first identify the production plan and distribute the workload. Next, students develop a storyboard or sketch-out

of the assignment, which includes the visual elements, timing, and sound ideas for the commercial. Then students write the script based upon the previously completed storyboard. Faculty may check out the NMWS during open lab hours, reserve the laboratory for their classes, request the staff to conduct a presentation or workshop for their courses, or seek advice with assignment design and software education from the NMWS staff. Rode and Schmidt request that faculty plan ahead and submit the project order form via the NMWS website at [www.newmedia.tcu.edu](http://www.newmedia.tcu.edu).

Communication is ever-evolving and graduates with experience using different forms of writing will be a valuable asset to employers. Rode reminds us that “we need to recognize that more and more communication is now taking place visually and digitally; as a result, our writing instruction should help students anticipate how they will communicate effectively after they leave the University.”



## Reflections on the Academic Portfolio

Eric Cox  
Political Science

When I signed up for the academic portfolio workshop offered by the Koehler Center for Teaching Excellence, my goal was to begin preparing my file for promotion and tenure. In the course of preparing my portfolio with the assistance of a mentor, however, I realized that the process of preparing the portfolio and the narrative that accompanies it would help me improve as a teacher and a researcher. Since completing the program, I have served as a mentor to others over three summers. My work as a mentor has reaffirmed this initial view. The academic portfolio

program at TCU provides an excellent opportunity for faculty to create an evidence-based collection of their work that assists them both in preparing materials for review by their peers and administrators and to self-evaluate their strengths and areas for improvement.

The portfolio is a fairly straightforward collection of materials that demonstrates an individual's research, teaching, service, and other professional accomplishments. For an individual preparing for promotion, the portfolio can be assembled to conform to her college's particular formatting requirements. Others may configure the portfolio more broadly with more comprehensive documentation from which materials may be drawn for other purposes – my own portfolio followed this latter model. Regardless of how materials are arranged, the most important part of assembling the portfolio is the construction of the personal narrative.

The narrative is the part of the portfolio that allows an individual to reflect on his or her teaching, research, service and goals. While this may seem relatively straightforward, the key to constructing the narrative is to ensure that each component is well documented and explained. The narrative includes sections on teaching philosophy and methods. In preparing this section, individuals are asked to think about specific examples of how they put their philosophies into practice. Similarly, the narrative provides an opportunity to discuss teaching evaluations, including an explanation of how the individual uses teaching evaluations for improvement. In discussing research, individuals are able to highlight particularly notable publications as well as to put their overall research into perspective. The section on service affords the opportunity to discuss contributions on campus, in the community, and to the profession in a way that may not be apparent in annual reports. Finally, the goals section is not simply a wish list of things one hopes to accomplish; rather, it is a statement of three or four items that can be reasonably accomplished, including concrete timelines for

# KOEHLER C E N T E R EVENTS

## Teacher-Scholar Writing Workshop: Balancing the Roles of the Teacher-Scholar

Balancing the roles of the teacher-scholar is often hard to do, especially during the academic year. Join us to hear strategies for success.

See our [Koehler Events website](#) for more information and to register. This workshop is offered in partnership with the William L. Adams Center for Writing.

**Wednesday, April 17, 2013 9:30am-11:30am**  
**Kelly Center, Cox C**



Sarah Robbins  
Lorraine Sherley  
Chair in Literature



Dennis Cheek  
Abell-Hanger  
Professor of  
Gerontological  
Nursing



Lindy Crawford  
Ann Jones  
Endowed Chair in  
Special Education

achieving them.

The narrative provides a moment for reflection for the author. Rather than simply writing a statement of teaching philosophy and methods, by asking for evidence the narrative requires the careful consideration of how classes are constructed and why certain strategies are used. Compiling evaluations across semesters also allows for the careful consideration of patterns in student and, where applicable, peer evaluations. Similarly, discussions of research helps to identify strategies for publication that have succeeded in comparison to those that have not. A similar process allows individuals to consider the totality of their service over time.

Key to this process is working with the mentor, normally a faculty member in another department or college who has previously completed the portfolio workshop. The mentor serves to help us see things we may not see ourselves, including patterns in our work and relationships between different areas. The mentor also provides a sounding board. Since mentors are from different disciplines than mentees, they are able to provide an outside perspective on a candidate's file and may be able to suggest different ways to present material to an outside audience.

In my personal experience, the portfolio workshop helped me evaluate my progress as a professor at TCU. When I went through the process, I had experienced good teaching evaluations and was making service contributions, but my research productivity was lacking. The portfolio process helped me to improve in all areas. Examining my teaching and explaining why I used the methods I did to my portfolio mentor helped me to understand better why the techniques I used worked and ways that I could make them better. Discussing my service made me realize that I could better prioritize my commitments and, something that I found difficult, ask for help in certain areas where I had been reluctant to do so. Finally, in evaluating my research and my goals, I realized how unfocused my goals had been.

The production of the portfolio required me to explain not only what I hoped to accomplish, but also how I was going to do it.

Since completing the portfolio, I have learned the value of returning to it at least once a year. By returning to the narrative, I can make a personal evaluation of what I have accomplished and where I can improve. It is a constant reminder that our careers are works in progress. Most rewarding for me, however, has been serving as a mentor in the program. As noted above, I have worked with individuals from several different departments across campus. This has enabled me to see firsthand what amazing faculty members we have at TCU. It has also allowed me to see the techniques for success my colleagues have employed, further allowing me to reflect on ways I can improve.

The portfolio process is valuable. While it is helpful in preparing one's file for promotion and tenure, its value extends far beyond this objective. It is an opportunity for reflection and development as a faculty member.



## Talking about Grade Inflation: a Broader Perspective

Peter Worthing

History and Geography / Koehler Center Fellow



The message does not appear in my inbox every semester or even every year, but it comes often enough. It arrived this past August to remind me of an issue that needs periodic attention. The e-mail in question originates in the AddRan

Dean's office, usually with a suggestion to "do with this as you see fit" or that it is "just for your information." Since it always includes an attached document, which lists those instructors in our department who have the highest grade distribution averages, I cannot help but see an unwritten subtext that reads "some of your folks are giving way too many `A` grades!" As the chair of a department that employs a significant number of both adjunct faculty and doctoral students, all of whom feel some pressure to get good student evaluations, I perhaps face this issue more than others. As I considered how to address this issue with my colleagues, it occurred to me that rather than try to convince faculty members to adjust their grades, it might be worthwhile to use this as an opportunity to open a larger discussion about what we are trying to accomplish and how we go about it.

In 2011, a book entitled *Academically Adrift* garnered a good deal of attention from academia and the media. The authors, Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa, tracked college student learning and argued that the data indicates that a large percentage of students failed to demonstrate significant gains in critical thinking, complex reasoning, and writing skills over the course of their college careers. They also concluded that students who faced more rigorous coursework in their initial years in college tended to demonstrate greater gains in learning, do better in their remaining years, and enjoyed greater success on the job market. The idea that hard work brings benefits is hardly novel. When talking to students, I sometimes compare academic work to physical exercise telling them that if they do a single push up each day they cannot expect to see many results. The same is true of their brains and avoiding challenging courses will not bring the desired results. They need to push themselves and raise their expectations in order to build their upper body strength or their brains. With regard to the latter, faculty members bear a significant responsibility for setting the parameters of the workout. The discussion surrounding this book led me to think of the issue of grade



inflation in different terms. Rather than discuss what grades we assign, why not open a discussion about rigor and what we are asking students to do?

Actually, I did both. At the start of the fall semester in meetings with full time faculty, adjuncts, and graduate teaching assistants I shared the data on grade inflation from the dean's office (with no names), but then pivoted into an *Academically Adrift*-inspired call to faculty members to think about the level of rigor in their classes. Students have invested in us, quite heavily in some cases, and it is our responsibility to do our best to give them the opportunity to get a good return on that investment by challenging them to do more, to read more, to write more, and to think more. If Arum and Roksa are correct, then it is crucial to do so in the first two years. We certainly need to be mindful of "holding the line" as some have described attempts to curb grade inflation, but this also provides an opportunity to think more broadly about our expectations and the degree to which we challenge our students. I have no idea what my colleagues thought of my remarks this fall, but I am sure it was more productive than simply telling them "we are giving too many 'A' grades!"



## Involve and Learn: i>Clicker Dialogue for the Classroom

Catherine Coleman  
Schieffer School of Journalism

“Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I may learn.”—Benjamin Franklin

For many teachers, particularly of large classes, creating an environment conducive to active learning can seem a

challenge. Teachers may turn to technology-based solutions with the perception that students of today are not only tech-savvy, but are tech-engrained. In teaching strategic communication and advertising, fields in which technology is a dominant part of the conversation, I often feel compelled to present a high-tech show lest I appear behind the rapidly changing field. However, using technology simply for the sake of using it is not only unproductive; it is counterproductive and distracting. My students have taught me that when used well and when inspired by learning objectives, technology-based solutions such as i>Clicker encourage them to “show up” both physically and mentally—to involve them in learning<sup>1</sup>.

### Instructor Perspective: Live Dialogue

When I began using i>Clicker for a 350-student introductory course at the University of Illinois, I had the opportunity to learn from Tim Stelzer, one of the inventors of i>Clicker. He allowed me to observe his course and offered tips that have guided my approach to Clickers since. I learned three main lessons from this initial introduction and from subsequent experience:

*Intellectual attendance.* The value of Clickers is not fully realized when they are used solely for attendance (and given that one of the criticisms of the Clicker system seems to be cost of remotes, I am uncomfortable requiring purchase simply for attendance). In fact, students in classes in which I use Clickers are not graded on attendance, but rather on participation, professionalism and learning. To this end,

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<sup>1</sup> Research on Clickers has demonstrated their effectiveness for objectives beyond taking attendance and checking students' knowledge of facts (see McGowan and Gunderson 2010). They can encourage critical thinking (e.g., Mollborn and Hoekstra 2010) and advanced reasoning (e.g., DeBourgh 2008). This research has helped me articulate for students my philosophy in using Clickers, and has provided insights into new ways of employing this tool. Some of it is compiled on the i>Clicker website.

Clickers can be used to involve students in multiple ways. For example, if there is little consensus on an answer I ask students to turn to their neighbor, come to a consensus and answer again (“think-pair-share”). I find this approach further communicates to students that benefits of class come not from inhabiting a seat or even in being a spectator; the value is in intellectual attendance and participation.

*Encouragement not punishment*<sup>2</sup>. Credit allocated for Clickers should be enough to encourage students to feel invested in using them but not so much that it feels punitive (and should not be so much that students intent on cheating the system and themselves will be rewarded heavily for doing so). In my classes, i>Clicker accounts for between 4%-7% of the course grade. Students accumulate points for responding and additional points for responding correctly (when a correct answer applies) for a pre-determined semester maximum. Clicker questions are a part of every class period so participation is engrained in the class environment. Students are offered well over the number of questions necessary to reach the maximum (approximately 1.5 times). Therefore, I need not offer make-up opportunities; even with some missed classes, forgotten remotes or incorrect answers students still have a chance to achieve full credit.

*Live Dialogue*. Students who understand why Clickers are used will get more out of using them than those who do

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<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, there are some students who may want to circumvent the system. In fact, in user feedback on Clickers, this seems to be one of the more frequently cited concerns. Though I do not find this to be a prevalent problem, it does happen. There is never any reason that one student should be using two Clickers at once. I communicate to students at the beginning of the semester and in the syllabus that the misuse of i>Clicker, including having a classmate log responses in one's absence or logging responses for an absent classmate, are violations of academic integrity and will be penalized with a zero grade on i>Clicker for the semester for all parties involved. In addition, i>Clickers are not the only measure I use of student participation. For example, students have in-class and out-of-class exercises that may come out of or feed into i>Clicker questions.

not. Therefore, clearly articulating to students how and why i>Clicker is used and connecting it to course objectives is important. I ask various types of questions from memory-based to analysis-based and use Clickers as one of several methods to engage students with multiple ways of thinking about information and multiple ways of knowing. I turn to student feedback on i>Clicker to explicate this point.

### **Student Perspective: “It helps me learn!”**

While a few students have been critical of i>Clicker—they do not like having to remember their remotes every class or they feel slight anxiety about answering questions incorrectly—a significant majority indicate that i>Clickers help them learn and encourage their engagement. A qualitative content analysis of anonymous student feedback across three semesters reveals the following dominant themes, supported by student quotes:

- Students appreciate the immediacy of Clickers. Clicker use helps them “gauge their understanding of materials;” class discussions about right and wrong answers following a question help them understand concepts; they like knowing where they stand in relation to the rest of the class; and they like knowing their responses offer the instructor feedback on what concepts need more attention.
- Students feel it is a way to have a dialogue with the instructor and with their classmates, particularly in larger classes and particularly for students who may feel less comfortable speaking up during class-wide discussions; it gives them “an active voice” and “allows students to participate in class without being afraid they will get judged.”
- They indicate appreciating the additional incentive not simply to come to class but to pay attention. Some find

they “love the course material, but in any large lecture class... it is easy to get distracted.” i>Clicker invites them to maintain focus.

- Students like receiving various types of questions through i>Clicker and appreciate opportunities to receive practice test questions. I cue students when I offer a sample test question and I try to teach them to distinguish various types of questions (e.g., memory-based, application-based from Bloom's Taxonomy).
- Finally, while not a dominant theme, several students recently have requested more opinion-based questions. They like being asked and being able to give their opinions. They find these types of questions fun, and they enjoy seeing how their responses compare to those of their classmates. Opinion questions may have value in sparking broader discussions that can be related directly to course concepts.

Involvement is important for learning and, when well implemented and driven by course objectives, i>Clicker encourages involvement and may serve as one tool to awaken course content for students. Clickers provide educators with an efficient and interactive tool to involve students so they may learn.

Sources mentioned in this article can be found on the [References page](#).



## Got a Big Class? i>Clickers Can Bring it Down to Size

Michael Sawey  
Biology

A few years back I expanded my section of Intro Biology from 90 to 180 students. At the time I didn't think there would be much difference between 90 and 180 – both are large lecture classes—but I soon realized that with 180 students, it's easy for some to melt into the background and become invisible. Some students might like that, but it certainly isn't the best way to keep them engaged with the lecture! After a few failed experiments with ways to engage the class, I discovered the i>Clicker. It has revolutionized not only my large lecture class but also my smaller classes.

When I first began using the i>Clicker, it was mostly to poll the class about topics related to the lecture that might be relevant or interesting to them. It was meant to be a way to keep them interested and paying attention, and it worked. I wanted to find a way to encourage all of the students to participate, so I made a small portion of their grade (5%) clicker participation. The software that came with i>Clicker made it very easy to track their usage and give them points for responding. I required them to answer at least 75% of



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Alise Alford (i>clicker representative) will join Koehler Center staff for these “special topics” labs. Ms. Alford will be available to work with faculty on incorporating i>clicker into courses. She'll also be able to offer demonstrations, if you're interested in seeing the i>clicker in action. Just “drop in” during this session for information about including iClicker in your courses. **No Registration Required.**

Find out more on our [workshop page](#).

the questions in order to get credit for participating – that prevented students from simply answering one question and getting full credit.

At the time I first began using i>Clickers, I was still passing out paper quizzes at the start of each lecture. You can imagine how involved that process was with 180 students! i>Clicker was such a success that the following semester I decided to take it to the next level. I stopped giving paper quizzes at the start of lecture and instead used i>Clicker for both participation credit and quiz credit.

This was not something I did lightly – I was not naive about students' ability to cheat. So I changed the way I assessed them. Instead of asking a series of questions all together at the start of lecture, I interspersed clicker questions throughout the lecture. In addition to the quiz questions, I mixed in simple opinion/participation questions. This served two purposes. First, it kept students engaged the entire time because they never knew when I might ask a question. Second, it seemed to cut down on cheating because students didn't know whether the clicker questions counted toward their participation or as part of their quiz, so they just answered each question as if I had called on them in class – not as if it were a high stakes quiz. One of the nice things about the i>Clicker software is that it is powerful, yet simple to use. This makes it easy to change what you do because you know it isn't going to require a steep learning curve or significant data entry changes. I appreciate this, because I try new things all the time. Most recently, I wanted to encourage my students to talk with each other to work out problems or answer questions collaboratively. Again, I use i>Clickers to do this. When I ask a question that a large percentage of

the class gets incorrect, I show them the results with a simple push of a button. Then I ask them to discuss the question with their neighbors and I will ask them the question again. Invariably, the problems resolve themselves and most of the class gets the question right. This doesn't work for everything; sometimes you want to assess individuals, but it is a powerful way for students to learn because they acquire the knowledge not from me, but through their neighbor.

I have used i>Clickers in various ways through the years, which is testimony to their flexibility and ease of use. I am impressed with the thoughtfulness of i>Clicker's design. For example, the instructor i>Clicker serves as both my PowerPoint advancer and a laser pointer so I never have to set it down during lecture. This makes it feasible for me to ask questions "on-the-fly" even when I have not created a dedicated slide for a clicker question. Also, the software used to collect the information has proven to be very dependable. I have used this for 4 years now and the only errors were ones made by me or by one of my students. The software is even able to work effortlessly between Mac and PC. I use a PC in the lecture hall where I gather the clicker data, but I use a Mac in my office to analyze the data and create grades. Never have I had a problem or conflict between the two systems. I am excited to see how i>Clicker evolves in the future because I am always looking for ways to stay on the cutting edge of technology in my classroom. i>Clicker has made it possible for me to say with confidence that I engage my large lecture classes effectively and give the students an experience more akin to what they would receive in a smaller class. Thanks i>Clicker!





# KOEHLER C E N T E R EVENTS

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**Time: 11:30am to 1:00pm, Lunch included**

**Location: Beck & Geren, Brown-Lupton University Union**

See our [Koehler Events website](http://www.nytimes.com/edu) for more information and to register.

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