

Focus on Teaching Committee Annual Report:  
2004-2005

The activities of the Focus on Teaching Committee were primarily dedicated to 1. supporting John Langton's efforts as Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) Director to create a teacher development program at WC, answering the questions, "what makes great teachers great?", "how to develop a structure of WC faculty teaching excellence and enrichment?" 2.. specific programs to improve faculty teaching, Reading Strategies and ANGEL course management system. 3. programs to enhance teaching in Tier II 4. projects that arose during the course of discussion such as revising the CTE/ Focus on Teaching website, and an evaluation system of Focus on Teaching programs.

After electing Therese Miller as the Chair of the Focus on Teaching Committee, we established a meeting time that worked for all members. John Langton explained the summer programs that the CTE and F on T committees had provided over the summer. These included the ANGEL training, conducted with Computer Services on Monday, July 19, 2004 and the Teaching Reading Strategies Program led by Dr. Debbie Crouse on August 16 & 17, 2004 (outlining strategies to improve student reading capabilities)

On Friday, September 17, 2004, Dr. Mark Taylor led two separate workshops on "Generation NeXt" and "Postmodern Pedagogy.". These were co-sponsored by the Center for Teaching Excellence, the Focus on Teaching Committee, the Center for Leadership and Service, and the Office of Academic Affairs. A faculty discussion followed Dr. Mark Taylor's presentation on Friday, September 24<sup>th</sup>. Therese Miller initiated the discussion with a Venn Diagram noting shared and distinct characteristics of the students based on the two models: Millennials vs. Generation NeXt. John Langton asked faculty to consider the pedagogical methods of Dr. Taylor's presentation. Faculty discussion followed.

The faculty participated in The Essentials of Communicating with Diplomacy and Professionalism on October 12, cosponsored by Council of Chairs and Focus on Teaching. The event was designed to improve communication among all individuals on campus by recognizing different personal communication styles and methods to work with persons with other styles.

Continuing up the rung of teaching in the WC general education (Tier I discussion was focus of 2003-2004), a Tier II Faculty Discussion was held on Friday, October 29<sup>th</sup>. The theme of the workshop : "Tier II: What are we doing-What should we be doing?". Ted Jaeger initiated the discussion by describing the development of the New Foundations and in particular the goals of Tier II. After faculty discussion, it was decided that more focused discussion within the separate Contexts would be more beneficial. (Tier II context luncheons were scheduled for the month of February:

Feb. 7 - Human Behavior Context and Historical Perspectives Context

Feb. 14 - Scientific Inquiry Context

Feb. 28 – Cultural Diversity and Global Interdependence, Artistic Expression and Critical Appreciation, and Fundamental Questions and Values contexts)

In committee action, the F on T committee, responding to a Council of Chairs recommendation to combine the Focus on Teaching Committee and Assessment

Committee, unanimously determined that the committees should not be combined at this time since both committees are still operating in the formative stages. This may be revisited again once the activities of each group are more permanent and established.

To continue the work begun in the fall semester, faculty volunteers demonstrated the many uses of ANGEL course management system at an ANGEL DEMO, sponsored by Computer Services; F on T and CTE on Tue, Dec. 7, 2004. A few faculty members demonstrated how they have used the ANGEL courseware management software to help teach and/or manage their courses this semester. Another ANGEL Update was conducted on April 12.

The Focus on Teaching/ Center for Teaching Excellence also sponsored a Reading Brown Bag on Wednesday, the Jan. 26 in which Professor Debbie Crouse gave a short overview of reading strategies that faculty may want to initiate in the upcoming semester.

After visiting the West Point Center for Teaching Excellence and Technology Seminar, John recounted his visit at an April 27 Luncheon to a group of WC faculty. John also purchased copies of Ken Bain's book, *What the Best College Teachers Do* for faculty to read before Bain's visit in September, 2005. John's enthusiasm for a Master Teacher Program was stimulated by this visit.

Proposals and projects that were worked on this year included:

F on T / CTE Survey to evaluate needs of faculty and most beneficial programs

Tier II Matrix – advance Teaching in the Tiers Discussion

Web Page Revision – update and revise resource listing.

Faculty Recognition – promote teaching excellence visibility

Master Teaching Program – develop a structure for faculty teaching excellence & enrichment

Therese M. met with Cyndi Elliott to initiate discussion re: spirituality at WC (in response to David Jones' NSSE report)

Future Goals

I would like to see the college utilize Westminster College personnel resources - we had discussed having Dr. Sue Serota talk to faculty re: trends in higher education.

I would like to facilitate faculty access and utilization of Jennifer Benne's grant writing support.

Since Tier II evaluation is a focus of Assessment Committee in the upcoming year, this would be a good time to facilitate focused discussion in this area.

Another issue that has been discussed periodically and repeatedly is faculty workload. Efforts have been made this year to reduce committees and committee membership. The Focus on Teaching Committee could create ways to support each teacher in their efforts to develop professionally with productive and efficient use of time.

Considerations for improving student engagement were made this year - students still spend less time preparing for class than faculty desire (note: WC student preparation time is not significantly different from other schools.)

Strategies to meet the contrasting needs of bimodal student population were raised: eg. for lower scoring students - RSSP option, more learning study skills, limiting course load to 12 hours, more remedial support., linked courses (ie. psychology, world history), and Tier Tutors., faculty clearly stating class expectations, and base scores for certain entry level courses (as in Math Department)

Retention: In a discussion of FSSE (Faculty Survey of Student Engagement), which is a companion assessment tool to the NSSE, it was stated that WC did a pilot of this assessment tool three years ago. Some suggestions for how to use this tool if administered in the future would be to use the results as they relate to retention issues. This led to a discussion of efforts to improve retention. Some ideas included: remedial classes for students with ACT reading scores less than 21, reading and studies programs tied to fraternity, sororities and living groups, expanding the scope or philosophy of Westminster Seminar to meet more student's needs (structure the course content to incorporate remediation, help good students get better, and / or deliver as a full content course) Student committee members agreed that these concerns about academic success also affect students socially as well.

#### Focus on Teaching Committee Membership Reports (2004 –2005)

Ben Budde was extremely dedicated in his role as a member of the Focus on Teaching Committee. He attended 13 of 14 committee meetings. Ben was helpful in revising the Focus on Teaching Evaluation form. (Hopefully we'll have the final draft ready for 2005) His responses to issues and proposals were based on years of experience with this committee. Thank you for your commitment and service to the college and the Focus on Teaching Committee.

Theresa Adams was very devoted in her service to the Focus on Teaching Committee. She attended 12 of 14 meetings. Her comments regarding proposals and issues were very thoughtful and deliberate. She was always willing to help with activities of the Committee, such as working on F on T evaluation, leading a Tier II context discussion, and preparing discussion questions from Dr. Taylor's presentation. Thank you for your service to the College, its Writing Programs and the Focus on Teaching Committee. It has been a pleasure to serve on this committee with you.

From discussion of teaching issues with her in and out of meetings, it is apparent that Angela Gerling is passionate about teaching excellence and effectiveness at Westminster College and willing to support the college to this end. Angela worked with Marci McCauslin, Margie Lechner, and Therese Miller to update the webpage and volunteered to help with other committee activities.

It was inspiring and enjoyable to work with John Langton (Director of CTE) on the Focus on Teaching Committee. John and I met almost weekly on Thursday mornings (prior to all Friday meetings) to discuss the ideas, proposals, activities, goals, and direction of the CTE and F on T. I know that with John's passion and energy, Westminster College will soon have a Master Teacher Program. John's motivation to make WC teachers "great" led to the subscription of "The Professor" to all faculty departments, procuring Ken Bain as speaker for the upcoming academic year, working with the mentoring program, and visiting West Point and their Center for Teaching/ Master Teacher Program. I look forward to working with John in the upcoming years. Thank you for your service to the College and inspiration to faculty and students.

Keith Hardeman attended 11 of 14 Focus on Teaching meetings. He notified me when he needed to miss for other college-related activities. Keith was very dedicated to the work of the Committee and ensuring that the proposals of the Focus on Teaching committee were in line with efforts to protect faculty from unnecessary work, void of evaluative characteristics, and were utilitarian and efficient. His comments opened dialogue that enabled the committee to engage in productive dialogue. Thank you for your service to Westminster College, this committee, and its students.

Respectfully submitted,

Therese Miller, Ph.D.  
Focus on Teaching Committee, Chair