

**Volume 11  
Issue 1  
Fall 2008**

**“Ideas for Starting  
the New Academic  
Year”**

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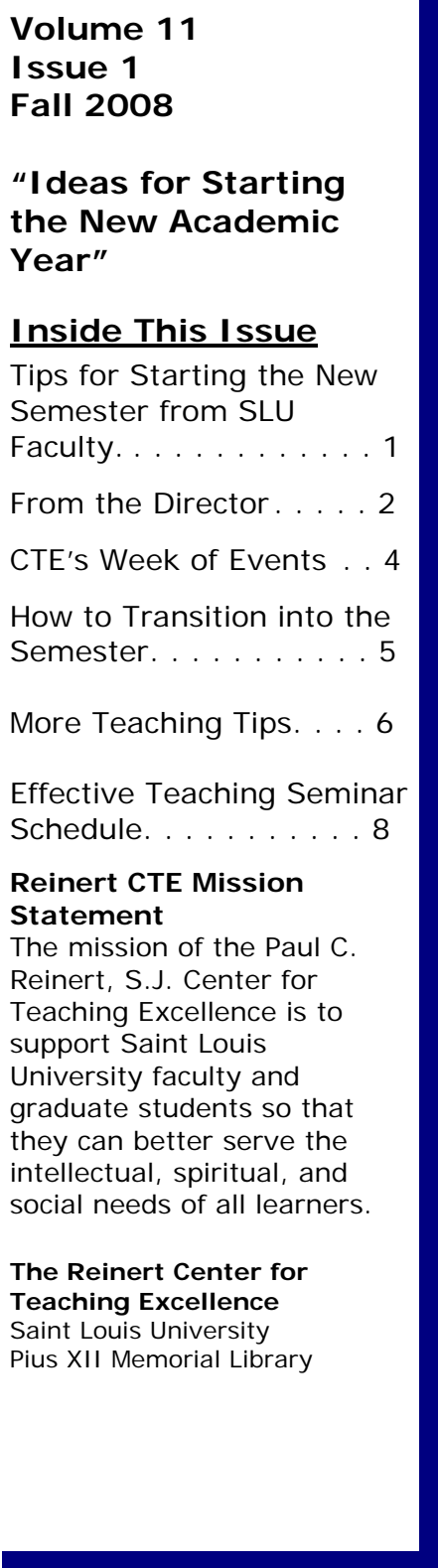
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**Reinert CTE Mission  
Statement**

The mission of the Paul C.  
Reinert, S.J. Center for  
Teaching Excellence is to  
support Saint Louis  
University faculty and  
graduate students so that  
they can better serve the  
intellectual, spiritual, and  
social needs of all learners.

**The Reinert Center for  
Teaching Excellence**

Saint Louis University  
Pius XII Memorial Library





## From the Director

The beginning of an academic year is an exciting time; a time of fresh beginnings. In *Teaching within the Rhythms of the Semester* (Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1995), authors Duffy and Jones refer to the beginning of a semester as the “honeymoon period when energies are high and students are open to new approaches”, as well as the “period when classroom community must be built.” From years of teaching, I know that colleagues are a great resource when it comes to getting new and interesting ideas for approaching the semester. With that in mind, we invited several faculty members to share a practical idea or strategy that they use to get the semester off to a good start. This first issue of the CTE Notebook for the academic year 2008-2009 highlights responses that we received to this invitation. In it you will find not only teaching tips but some ideas for managing time and obligations. We are indebted to the faculty members who generously contributed teaching tips.

This issue of the Notebook also spotlights events planned to celebrate the Center’s new location on the floor of Pius XII Memorial Library. The week of September 8<sup>th</sup> will feature many informal opportunities to learn about the services that the Center offers to faculty and graduate teaching assistants. The schedule of events can be found in this newsletter. In particular, we invite you to join us for a Blessing on September 8<sup>th</sup> beginning at 3:00 for a blessing of our new space by John Kavanaugh, S.J. We encourage you to join us on September 10<sup>th</sup> for a workshop on “Bringing Lectures to Life Through Stories and Anecdotes,” a conversational, interactive approach to teaching content by author Lynn Rubright, professor emeritus, Webster University, School of Education.

The Center is open from 8:00 – 5:00, Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. We invite you to stop in at your leisure to meet our staff, tour our facilities and learn about our programs and services.

On behalf of the entire CTE staff, I wish you a productive, successful academic year.

**We’ve Moved!**  
**Please Come visit us at our new location!**

### **Bringing Lectures to Life Through Stories and Anecdotes: A Conversational, Interactive Approach to Teaching Content**

**Presented by:**  
**Lynn Rubright**  
**Professor Emeritus**  
**Webster University, School of Education**  
**Wednesday, September 10, 2008**  
**1:00-3:00pm**  
**DuBourg Hall 409**  
**Registration Required!**  
**(register online at [http://cte.slu.edu/launch\\_week.html](http://cte.slu.edu/launch_week.html))**

**Sponsored by the Center for Teaching  
Excellence**  
**Contact: 977-3944**  
**[cte@slu.edu](mailto:cte@slu.edu)**

*(Continued from Page 1)*

For me, the start of the semester requires that the items that have migrated throughout the year return to their proper home. As I do this, I recall the excitement we felt as I pulled out the book or article that perfectly fit their project. As I move into the classroom, I try to capture that sense of doing things together. I sincerely believe that it is unstated expectations that contribute to most of the tension and disruptions in class. ("You expected me to



The Reinert Center for Teaching Excellence  
presents

## **CTE's Week of Events**

Join us in a special week of events to launch our new location on the 2nd floor of Pius XII Memorial Library

### **Monday, September 8**

3:00 – 5:00p.m. : Blessing of Center by Fr. John Kavanaugh, S. J.  
Open House and reception to follow  
Pius Memorial Library, 2nd Floor, AB Wing

### **Tuesday, September 9**

12:00 – 1:00p.m. : Brown Bag Conversation: Teaching and Technology  
Sandy Gambill, BSC 254

12:00 – 1:00p.m. : Brown Bag Conversation: Service Learning  
Mark Pousson, Allied Health 2030

### **Wednesday, September 10**

10:00 - 11:00a.m. : Conversation on Teaching Enhancement Programs  
Beth Hill, Allied Health 2024

1:00 - 3:00p.m. : "Bringing Lectures to Life Through Stories & Anecdotes"  
Lynn Rubright, DuBourg 409 (please register)

### **Thursday, September 11**

12:30 - 2:00p.m. : Integrating Learning Across the Curriculum  
Beth Hill & Liz Fathman, Knight's Room, Pius Library

### **Friday, September 12**

10:00 - 11:00a.m. : Conversation on Teaching Enhancement Programs  
Beth Hill, DB 406

12:00 - 1:00p.m. : Brown Bag Conversation: Teaching and Technology  
Sandy Gambill, Allied Health 1036

12:00 - 1:00p.m. : Brown Bag Conversation: Service Learning  
Mark Pousson, VH 219

*[http://cte.slu.edu/launch\\_week.html](http://cte.slu.edu/launch_week.html)*

# How to Transition Into the Semester

Shawn Nordell, Biology

We all know that the fall semester is almost upon us and this causes many of us to start hyperventilating at the thoughts of all that is left to be done and all that we somehow did not manage to get done over the summer. The summer can be a terrific time of research and writing productivity as the demands from committees and teaching can be somewhat attenuated. So how do we prepare for the upcoming fall semester and increased demands of teaching, research and service?

## **1) Write out your long term goals and schedule them**

For many academics, publications are the key to success. Therefore, writing is critical to your success. Although most academics find time to do research, teach and committee work they often do not schedule time for writing.

## **2) Schedule your writing.**

Research on successful academics indicates that most write in short, focused time periods each and every day and that they schedule this time first (for more information see Richard Boice's Advice for New Faculty Members). Schedule a 20-30 minute (or longer) writing session for the beginning of your day before you get caught up in other commitments. It's easy to get sidetracked as you start responding to requests so do your writing early before these can happen. If you can only fit in 10 minutes a day this will still help you maintain a continuous concentration on your writing which can be very beneficial and productive. It may also be useful to form an on campus writing group or join an online writing clubs (for more information check out the Academic Writing Club) where you can share your writing experiences and progress.

## **3) Practice saying "No"**

Unfortunately this was not a class in graduate school and many faculty have little experience in this practice. However, before you agree to take on a new project or responsibility make sure that this is something you actually have time to complete. You can acknowledge the request and reply that you really need to determine if you have the time available to apply to this important project. Write out a schedule of all of your commitments for each and every day for the next week or two.

Be sure to include teaching preparation time, research time, writing time, email time, student meetings, lunch, and other committee requirements, etc. You may want to time yourself as you do some of these activities to see if your perception of the time they require is the same as the actual amount of time you spend on that activity (we often underestimate the time we spend on email).

Once you have done this you can determine if you have time to add another project to this schedule. If not, you can reply that although you believe that this is an important project you do not have the time resources to complete this work (for more information see Time Management from the Inside Out by Julie Morgenstern). One colleague I know then suggests to the requester that if they could remove one of their prior commitments they would be happy to use that time to work on this new project.

## **4) Limit the time you spend on class preparation and grading**

This may seem like true heresy but many faculty spend more time than needed to prepare for their classes. Is a single class time that took you five hours to prepare for really an improvement of your teaching over a class time that took you two hours to prepare? Probably not. Many faculty report that they realized after the fact that they spent more time than was needed preparing for classes and that this additional time did not improve their quality of their classes. It may help to write an outline of exactly what you need to prepare and how much time you will spend before you start preparing so that you stay focused and on schedule. Some faculty use the time before class (e.g. two hours) to prepare which limits their time and allows them to better focus on the upcoming class.

## **5) Don't forget about you**

It's easy to get lost in the sea of requests from students and administrators but scheduling time for you is what will help you better accommodate those requests. Don't forget to schedule lunch and/or a short break during the day where you get up and walk outside and smell the humidity! A short break can allow you time to reconnect with your goals and thoughts and become more focused and refreshed.

## More Teaching Tips

These teaching tips along with other teaching topics can be found at: [www.wku.edu/teaching/timesages/](http://www.wku.edu/teaching/timesages/)

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### Making Wise Use of Class Time

David M. Behrman, Somerset Community College

In my several years of teaching in college classrooms, I have become aware of the high value of time in class. Because class time is precious, I endeavor to make the best use of it that I can. I can suggest the following simple tips.

1. **Arrive a few minutes early.** I have noticed that many instructors tend to arrive right at the designated start time or even a few minutes late. Arriving late robs precious time from your class. I use the time *before* class to take care of essential preliminaries such as unpacking and organizing my materials and setting up the overhead projector. I also use this time to write reminders to the students on the board and pass back papers.
2. **Be organized.** When I was a student, there was nothing so maddening to me as sitting in the classroom of a professor who came unprepared. You may think you know the material so well that you can lecture without notes or without a plan. You may think the students won't know any better. Believe me, the students can tell the difference between an instructor who is prepared and one who isn't.
3. **Stay on task.** We as instructors sometimes experience frustration when our students converse, focus on their cell phones, or otherwise fail to pay attention to our scintillating lectures. For students, it can be just as frustrating when the instructor makes a habit of taking class time to engage in activities unrelated to the course. Some instructors have the notion that telling stories about their hobbies or about their families is a good way to connect with the students. I think small doses of this may be beneficial. But to take a substantial portion of the class for topics unrelated to the course sets a bad example and is a waste of the students' time. Good students will not appreciate it.
4. **Vary your presentation.** Most instructors are familiar with the glazed look in students' eyes, indicating a lack of comprehension.

When you see this, it is essential to move quickly to some other mode to re-engage your audience. No matter how well organized and fascinating your lecture, the glazed look is a sure sign that your message is not getting through. What purpose is served in 4 8cingung to mecture wien you rme sage is nTJT0



## Effective Teaching Seminar Schedule Fall 2008

September 2 @ 1:30p.m. September 5 @ 1:30p.m. Knight's Room, Pius Library	Preparing Your Syllabus Shawn Nordell, Biology Tom Valone, Biology <b><i>Orientation for new certificate participants immediately preceding both sessions, 1:00 - 1:30</i></b>
September 30 @ 1:30 p.m. October 3 @ 1:30 p.m. Knight's Room, Pius Library	Interactive Lecturing Paaige Turner, Communications
October 7 @ 1:30 p.m. October 10 @ 1:30 p.m. Knight's Room, Pius Library	Promoting Discussion in the Classroom Dan Finucane, Theological Studies <b><i>Teaching Portfolio Open Lab Session (immediately preceding both sessions, 12:00—1:30 pm)</i></b>
October 28 @ 1:30 p.m. Verhaegen 219	Active Learning Strategies Russell Blyth, Mathematics and Computer Science
November 4 @ 1:30 p.m. & November 7 @ 1:30 p.m. Knight's Room, Pius Library	The Art of Teaching Brian Till, CSB– Marketing
November 7	<b>Deadline for completion of Portfolios for the December Certificate</b>
November 18 @ 1:30 p.m. November 21 @ 1:30 p.m. Vehaegen 219	Classroom Assessment Ann Rule, Educational Studies Julie Weissman, Assoc. Provost
December 5 @ 3:30-5:00 p.m.	Certificate Ceremony

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