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Dear Colleagues:

Long Island University, first and foremost, exists for its students. We are a teaching institution and derive the lion share of the funds that sustain us from the students who come to us to learn. Therefore, it falls upon each of us not only to be experts in our respective fields, but to be great teachers.

Although all of us have spent much of our lives in schools and have distinguished ourselves in our various disciplines, few of us have been instructed in how to teach. Few of us have studied how students learn. Few of us have had the opportunity to explore the means and methods by which we can guide students to think for themselves.

Herein lies the purpose of the Teaching Learning Initiative (TLI). It is the central resource within the University to support faculty as teachers. The resources offered are varied and designed to support the development of teaching skills to faculty across disciplines at various levels of their own pedagogical development. Through workshops, lectures, technology resource centers, and brown-bag lunches, there are innumerable opportunities for all faculty members to hone their teaching skills. I urge you to learn about the TLI and to embrace the task of educating our students with the very same level of enthusiasm you would hope they would bring to the classroom. From my own experience, there are few professional activities more fulfilling than seeing the light in students' eyes as they find themselves learning.

As a colleague, I sincerely hope you find the same fulfillment in your teaching.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Kane
Vice President for Academic Affairs

Teaching with Technology Institute – A Celebration of Community

*Nancy Marksbury, Associate Director of Information Technology,
C.W. Post Campus*

What I love most about working with Long Island University is also what is best about the Teaching with Technology Institute: it is our intensely wonderful diversity. The TTI attracts faculty and staff from all our campuses and represents the microcosm of cultures and disciplines that comprise this university. People from all different backgrounds come together in a mutual attraction to technology and learning.

You also cannot spend a week working closely with people without getting to know them. Perhaps it is the intensity of the week that allows for some blurring of social boundaries we normally might not cross, letting us connect quickly. In this concentrated environment, we get to know each other as humans with families, lives and histories. There were shared stories of childhood, children, students, and our own school experiences. I saw faculty from different campuses and disciplines sharing their own philosophies and strategies for teaching, research and academic success with others they may never have met under ordinary circumstances.

After several semesters working in Post's Faculty Technology Resource Center and this, my second TTI, one might think I would no longer notice the transition of teachers as they become learners. A shift is required. To open oneself to learning requires a certain vulnerability. You must embrace your inner "unknowingness," which can be uncomfortable and intimidating, particularly for someone who may be a subject specialist or perhaps even a world authority on something. But come they do, sometimes with a sense of urgency and directedness, and sometimes with just vague ideas. The common thread bringing us together is a willingness to accept that "I don't know what I don't know, but I'm willing to learn."

Learning these bits of non-standard knowledge about our colleagues in an environment of openness and acceptance fosters transformation. We expand beyond the familiar four walls of our campus and limiting cultural and academic perspectives we are used to. While we come together from so many different backgrounds, we share the same desire to learn and to improve that which we offer students. Collaboration outside our usual lines for the greater good of us as educators and as an institution represents a powerful kind of strength because it builds the bonds we need to maintain a vibrant university. By celebrating a commitment to community, we illustrate how different groups can – and must – work together to build a stronger future. We are modeling a community of learners. ■



Transformative Thinking: A Philosopher reflects on the challenges facing Higher Education and Democracy

Long Island University TASA and Newton Award Lecture • April 27, 2006

By Gladys Schrynemakers, Assistant Provost, Brooklyn Campus

Guest speaker Dr. Elizabeth Kamarck Minnich

The 27th Biennial Trustees Award for Scholarly Achievement (TASA) and the David Newton Awards for Teaching Excellence were presented during a ceremony on April 27th in the newly inaugurated Kumble Theater for the Performing Arts. The University presents TASA honors biennially to faculty members in recognition of extraordinary scholarly achievement after an outside jury of distinguished scholars and artists reviews nominations and selects winners. The David Newton Awards, named for Dr. David Newton, a former executive vice president of Long Island University, recognizes faculty who continually strive to maintain Long Island University's highest teaching standards. Faculty are nominated by a Campus-based committee of their peers, using criteria including teaching presentation, attitude, expectations of students, and professional development and knowledge.

The ceremony was hosted by members of the Board of Trustees, President Steinberg, Academic Vice President Jeffrey Kane, and Brooklyn Campus Provost Gale Stevens Haynes. Honorees, hosts, and invited guests were captivated by speaker Dr. Elizabeth Kamarck Minnich, a noted thinker, scholar, educator, award winning author, and philosopher. Minnich's lecture, entitled, Knowledge, Thinking, Judgment: For Good or For Ill, struck an important chord in the ongoing tension between public responsibility and private interest. In her remarks, she carefully unraveled the flawed and disturbing prospects for democracy when education simply prepares students to become wage earners without regard to public commitment. She invited all present to consider teaching, research, and higher education not only as avenue for future employment, but, more importantly, as a path for thoughtful public life and reflective public good. She told her audience that to engage wholeheartedly in an epistemology of education that is concerned with "the implications of justice and equality for truth, for knowledge, thinking, and judgment, [she] particularly wanted higher education to recognize and keep thinking through very carefully how, in a would-be democracy, it can best serve the public good – which of course also entails asking ourselves, and differing about, what 'the public good' specifically in relation to education might be, and ask of us."

She warned about privatization and its threat to democracy, enjoining us not to be influenced by "...the deep roots of old, but not yet dead, prejudices, exclusions, [and] devaluations..." that creep into our work and world view. Her well-reasoned exposition and passionate plea resounded through the halls of the Brooklyn Campus—perhaps even in all the passages of all higher education in the nation—when she declared, without

hesitation, "I believe in the moral, political aspirations of democracy... and call them to our attention yet again now because I cannot speak about my work, or think about yours, in and for education all these years as if it were private. I believe we cannot discern excellence if we do not have equality, just as I believe that justice is a propaedeutic, a necessary ground-clearing and preparation, for any genuine quest for truth and meaning. Without equality, without justice, exclusive elitism masquerades as excellence, and prejudices block the paths, limit and distort the findings, of inquiry that,

like and with citizens, must be free if it is to realize its best."

Like other important philosophers and educators, she draws not only on her own research, but also pulls together the scholarship and ideas of others, including her teacher, Hanah Arendt, and Toni Morrison, both of whom were important resources for her thought-provoking discourse. Dr. Minnich is heartened by the rise in student volunteers who actively bring attention to "the privatization of water; sweat shop labor; prisons for profit; environmental destruction; peace issues; and more." It is just this type of political and social awareness activity, one that eschews "a use-value defined private good," that she believes must be a part of a liberal education in a free society.

In her concluding remarks, Dr. Minnich thanked those attending the ceremony "...for taking responsibility for the principles and practices of knowledge, thinking, and judgment you value by recognizing publicly those whom you have judged best to exemplify them." When we recognize scholarship and teaching, we do so not simply to bestow awards on our colleagues who have excelled but to establish and confirm the importance of developing thinkers who understand that untethered inquiry and open communication are essential underpinnings for democracy. ■



Back Row (TASA Recipients): Dr. Jeffrey Kane, Vice President for Academic Affairs; Dr. Geoff Goodman, TASA Recipient; Dr. Kristana Arp, TASA Recipient; Mr. Edward Shorin, LIU Trustee; Front Row (Newton Recipients): Mr. Thomas Pulling, LIU Trustee; Dr. Aaron Lieberman; Dr. Gavielle Levine; Dr. Seetha Tamma; Dr. Gerald Lachter; Dr. Sealy Gilles; Dr. Warren Ratna; Dr. David Steinberg, President

Dialogues on Teaching and Learning: The Brown Bag Lunches

by Mark G. Birchette

Coordinator of Faculty Development Projects for TLI

A major goal of the Teaching and Learning Initiative is to facilitate faculty networking and to provide venues where teachers with common interests from varied disciplines can connect to share their perspectives. While some of this networking occurs in relatively structured settings such as TLI-sponsored workshops and University-wide colloquia, last year marked the inauguration of a series of decidedly informal and often free-wheeling lunchtime conversations appropriately dubbed the “TLI Brown Bag Lunches.” Participants were invited to enjoy a mid-day interlude with faculty members from across the campus, with the promise of beverages and snacks on hand (but with an exhortation to bring one’s own lunch – thus the “brown bag” component) and with no set agenda aside from a general topic for discussion. Given the breadth of interests and expertise of the Long Island University faculty, and in light of the genuine commitment to teaching that is characteristic of our mission, it should come as no surprise that the informal conversation at the TLI lunches was animated, insightful, provocative, informative, and often delightfully humorous as well as profoundly serious. There was a total of three lunches during the past academic year: one each semester on the Brooklyn Campus and one in the spring term on the C.W. Post Campus.

“Teaching is Not Easy – What Help Do We Need?”

The topic of the first Brown Bag Lunches at the Brooklyn and C.W. Post Campuses explored the fundamental issue of what teachers need to be successful and acknowledged that teaching, in fact, is not an easy profession. The discussions commenced with an attempt to identify the characteristics of a good teacher and then proceeded to try to enumerate the skill sets and resources necessary to succeed. While there seemed to be a consensus regarding some basic requirements for good teaching, including accessibility, competency, humility, enthusiasm, empathy, good communication skills, fairness, and a sense of humor, there were other aspects that did not prompt universal acceptance, including self-confidence, flexibility, stamina, patience, organizational skills, creating a positive classroom environment, and incorporating a broad vision of education. Is it even possible to generate a “definitive” list of good teacher characteristics, or does so much depend on the individual nature of the students, the subject matter, the teacher’s personality and other contextual variables that any attempt to create such a list is futile?

The discussion then turned to a consideration of the skill set and resources we as teachers need in order to be effective and to help our students become better learners. Again, there was both agreement about some aspects of “what we need” and lack of consensus about others. Most participants seem to think that creating “new teacher” training/mentoring programs, establishing a repository of useful teaching materials, and providing ongoing professional development, were all necessary and useful. There was disagreement about the extent to which developing a faculty handbook, creating and maintaining faculty blogs or other web-based modes of disseminating information, and strictly enforcing student registration regulations, among many other issues, were significant factors with the potential to enhance teaching effectiveness. Regardless of the degree of consensus or dissent, however, it was incontrovertibly clear that all participants were fully engaged in the dialog and appreciated the

opportunity to hear others’ perspectives on issues of fundamental concern to all who are involved in promoting good educational practices.

“Ways to Improve Student Motivation”

Another TLI Brown Bag Lunch for the Brooklyn campus in March 2006 addressed the issue of improving student motivation. Initially, attendees identified possible impediments to student motivation, including but not limited to overemphasis on grades, lack of self-confidence, economic constraints necessitating heavy extra-curricular work schedules, poor study skills, pressing family commitments, poor organizational skills, short attention spans, unrealistic expectations of effort required to succeed, and deficient educational background. Then, the group attempted to delineate methods to engage/motivate students in ways that can enhance their ability to learn. The group generated several concrete suggestions for enhancing student motivation, among which were creating an appropriate classroom atmosphere, getting students to identify topics of specific interest that are course-related, developing and fostering a more personal relationship with students, providing regular positive reinforcement, creating small group activities, incorporating peer-review exercises, and implementing problem-based or inquiry-based approaches to teaching. There was much sentiment expressed for a follow-up

Your Invitation to the TLI Brown Bag Lunches

The first Brown Bag Lunch announcements declared: “...just come with your ideas, questions, concerns, suggestions, and an appetite for good conversation, good food, and good company.” These remain the only requirements for your participation, so stay tuned for information about the dates and times for the 2006-2007 TLI Brown Bag Lunch series (<http://vpaa.liu.edu/teach-and-learn.htm>) and come anytime you wish. A lively, informative exchange is guaranteed, and don’t forget to BYOC (Bring Your Own Colleagues) whenever you can.

Interested in becoming a TLI Brown Bag Lunch facilitator?

In 2006-2007, TLI will increase the number of Brown Bag Lunches at both Post and Brooklyn as well as initiate similar lunches at the regional campuses. If you are interested in serving as a Brown Bag Lunch facilitator in any of these venues, please contact me at mark.birchette@liu.edu and I will be very happy to discuss the protocols and other aspects of these events with you.

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What the best college teachers do

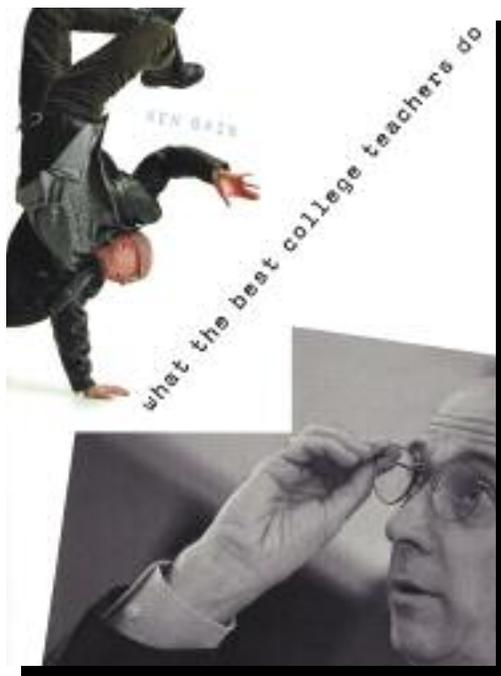
Written by Ken Bain

Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004. 190 pp.

“What the best college teachers do” is a thesis based on decades of inquiry and experience, rather than a toolbox of tried and true pedagogical methodologies. It does not promise any quick-fix classroom remedies or suggestions for conflict resolution. Rather, it is based on 25 years of extensive research into the classroom demeanor and personal characteristics of great teachers. This information is based on interviews with hundreds of students about teachers, conversations and interviews with professors about their colleagues, lists of major teaching award winners, and recommendations from students and professors. Through the use of interviews, classroom observation, and peer and student evaluation, 63 teachers from 40 different disciplines were chosen for this book.

Ken Bain, currently the Director for the Center of Teaching Excellence at New York University, suggests that his findings over the past 25 years are in contrast to the feelings of many traditional academics that believe teaching implies “transmitting knowledge, as if teaching is telling.” Bain’s 63 subjects purport that teaching only occurs when learning takes place. It is this notion that Bain tries to convey by proposing that the best teaching does not always rely on performance. Flashy PowerPoint presentations and classroom glitz and glamour do not always get students’ attention or promote learning, at least not in the long-term. The purpose of teaching, Bain suggests, is not to promote rote memorization or to dazzle, but to foster a student’s ability to reason and think.

The title “What the best college teachers do” gives insight into the way Bain views higher education. First, Bain does not refer to professors in the book title, but rather teachers. This is consistent with the opinion that “professor” may imply possession of an inordinate amount of subject knowledge “students can only envy.” Rather, Bain’s findings suggest ego and all knowing are significantly less important than trust in students’ learning abilities and the teacher’s humility. “When my teaching fails,” John Lachs, a philosophy professor at Vanderbilt, told us, “it is because of something I failed to do.” Several teachers inter-



viewed confessed to their students their own difficulty and struggles with the subject at hand. In this way, the best teachers did not demonstrate power, but investment in their students. Second, the “do” in the book’s title refers not only to a teacher’s actions in the classroom, but sometimes the non-action and covenant of trust developed between the teacher and student. This may be the only key needed to unlock the potential of a particular student; “with a trust and openness came an unabashed and frequently expressed sense of awe and curiosity about life, and that too affected the relationship that emerged.” A recent book by Donald Finkel – “Teaching with your mouth shut” – supports this idea.

Bain does a great job of systematically reviewing aspects essential of good teaching. Throughout the book, Bain reports extensively on how “excellent teachers” implement learning methods,

prepare for and conduct class, treat their students, and evaluate performance of their students and themselves. A major theme, however, is the need to create an appropriate environment that includes learning about students as people, not only as pupils; treating students with a positive attitude and non-judgment, and developing a trusting environment that promotes long-term learning. Although this would seem like common sense, it is easy to forget the power that can be wielded in a position of authority. Bain does not suggest that this book is totally inclusive. He also did not see this as an opportunity to test methods or approaches against one another which, he argues, would be appropriate for “further study.”

This book is not the “be all-end all,” but it does provide an excellent framework to begin to question the characteristics of a good teacher. I am sure that others might have opinions not represented in this text, but Bain’s prose often inspires. The traditionalists may not agree with some of what he writes, but Bain presents a cogent argument to assist those in the profession of higher education to begin to opening their minds to what constitutes good teaching. ■

Dialogues on Teaching and Learning: The Brown Bag Lunches

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discussion at future Brown Bag Lunches to consider some of these suggestions in more detail, perhaps with the formation of smaller groups of faculty who may want to focus on a specific topic over the course of several meetings.

I had the pleasure of facilitating all of the Brown Bag Lunches, and with the invaluable assistance of volunteer recorders at each event, I was able to incorporate the key points of every lunch discussion into a series of corresponding articles entitled “The Brown Bag Chronicles,” which was subsequently distributed by email to all who attended. Although the highlights of the lunches are summarized in this article, faculty who wish to review the full texts of past and future “Brown Bag

Chronicles” are invited come check out the lunches and sign up for the distribution list.

Future TLI Brown Bag Lunch topics considered for the 2006-2007 academic year include:

- Gauging teaching effectiveness
- Lecture strategies to improve learning and retention
- “What I wish someone had told me when I first began teaching”
- Making effective use of small groups
- Problem-based teaching
- Additional subjects to be determined by participant feedback at future lunches ■