

Inside This Issue

- 1 Discovering More About Provost Ott Rowlands
- 3 School of Learning, Student Spotlight
- 4 Faculty Speaks About Teaching
- 5 Technology Tips and Teaching Tips

Stephanie Klatzke
Jennifer Stansbury Koenig
Christopher Lawrence
Lili Ma
Philip McCartney
Gannon Tagher
Kenneth Rhee
Kimberly Weir

Discovering More about Provost Sue Ott Rowlands

Teaching Excellence, Innovation & Effectiveness

How important do you think teaching is to our core mission and reputation?

NKU's reason for existing from beginning has been a dedication to excellence and teaching. Initially, at the undergraduate level but now increasingly at the graduate level and I think that teaching is central to NKU's mission. Increasingly research and creative and scholarly activity is taking a more centralized role as well. I also think that civic engagement and community outreach from the very beginning was always central and so we see a beautiful connectivity between teaching and experiential learning when we think about community engagement. And when you really look at what's important to NKU and what we are known for... we are really known as a teaching institution but more than a liberal arts college, has aspiration to be among the leading innovators in teaching and learning, technology, pedagogy, experiential learning, undergraduate research, etc. So, what we have to do now is really find the best ways to articulate all of this and to leverage those strengths to increase our visibility and our reputation nationally and internationally.



What are some of the areas do you think we should keep or what are some of the areas do we need to change in order to enhance our teaching?

So, definitely the connection to our students, the willingness I see in faculty to support students, up close and personal . . . at the same time we have to be willing to acknowledge that up close and personal is not only about class size. Up close and personal is about our philosophy or our perspective about what good education is. I believe we need to invest more in faculty development, maybe classroom infrastructure, but I believe we need to get out of the mindset that small classes equal up close and personal.

Because of this . . . differential work load that we would like to see and the rebalancing of part time faculty to full time faculty, which I understand is so out of whack that 49% of our faculty are part time versus 51% full time, that's not good . . . every department that we need to rebalance that. But we can't do those two things and maintain a rigid adherence to small classes in every instance. . . if we go to larger sections or sizes, larger introductory sections, that can't also be up close and personal and that can't be good teaching. But, we know it can be . . . and that's a myth that we don't actually have the classrooms for larger sections . . . well we do, they are highly underutilized. And, even in our smaller classes, those are sometimes vastly under enrolled, so we are really hurting ourselves when we get to be too rigid in equating up close and personal to small classes. That's one way [to think about it] but it's not the only way.

How would you then respond to faculty comments in terms of equity in workload, because having a bigger class, more grading, additional work, etc....

I think workloads are agreements made between the faculty member and the department chair, with the approval of the dean. And that if the department chair and the faculty member agree that I'm going to teach a 150 seat class of introduction, and I don't have a teaching assistant, which you probably aren't going to have one here, then that should really count for two classes. I have no problem with that if the department chair can justify it and the dean sees it as equitable and they can work the finances around that, which can easily be done by simply not offering something else, or not having an adjunct teach that other class section . . . if they are good with it, then I'm not going to get involved.

So, if you have three sections right now with 50 students each, and you combine into 150, then mathematically you could argue that that should be counted as three courses instead of one.

Well, I probably, if I were a department chair, negotiate that to count for two, because our other option is to offer two sections at 75 each, so I think that probably the math wouldn't work, to go from three courses to one, but the math might could work to go from three courses to two. Or to do two at 75, you know, and of course what I'm talking about is undergraduate, I think things work differently in graduate education, I mean graduate education is about smaller classes sizes, and I also think that you know when we are looking at seminar sections, or capstones, or whatever, they are pedagogically speaking, types of classes that must be taught in smaller sections.

In my own field (theatre), you cannot teach voice to 100 students at a time, you cannot teach acting to 50 students at a time, but you can teach it to 22 or 24. . . its hard, but you can do it. Is it easier to do with 12 students? Sure, but is it a better experience for them, maybe or maybe not, maybe the opportunity to watch more people work, balances out the time they would have on their feet in the studio. So, I can argue all sorts ways. All I know is that excellent teaching can happen in many different ways and that we should be able to maintain our commitment to up close and personal without rigidly insisting on every class being offered in a very small section. Otherwise, everything else I am talking about can't happen. So this is the process of growing up as an institution. And I don't think it can happen all at once, so, probably over the course of three years we can get to where we want to be . . . it will have to be incremental.

What about teaching innovation?

I can tell you every acting class I have ever taught, I've taught the same way, because I know it works, but if I were to go back into the classroom, I would challenge myself on that, because I would try to teach it very differently. I have a philosophy that says " if you think something is fantastic, turn around and look at the exact opposite, and you may see something equally as fantastic or more so, and if you think something isn't working, turn around and look at the exact opposite, you may find the solution." So, if I think this is the way to go, before I do that, I need to look at something that is diametrically opposed to it.

I think the next question is going to be probably very important for a lot of faculty because of promotion and tenure, because of annual performance review, we are always assessed and evaluated on our teaching effectiveness, what do you think is the best way for us to assess faculty teaching effectiveness?

I actually love this questions because I think there are three ways—I think a self assessment is one part, I think the second part is student assessment, obviously what we do with course evaluations, and I think that third way is a peer evaluation or peer assessment. Again, all of these to me are formative, even the student evaluation, we should be able to learn about ourselves through what our students say. I [also] worry that we over assess here at NKU first of all, I worry that...

Can you say more about that?

Well, I'm not sure entirely, because I'm too new, I worry that between. . . how do I say this, weight and density of the annual RPT process, pre tenure, combined with the annual review process, means that a pre-tenure faculty member is always feeling under the gun. I think there is great value to annual reviews. I think we have to do those. It gives us feedback, and it's the way we base merit, but I'm really interested in those annual reviews becoming rich enough that they could essentially take the place of the additional annual RPT review.

And that instead of annual RPT review for pre tenure, there would be two substantive reviews prior to a person going up for tenure. So maybe in the second and the fourth year, or the third and the fifth, whatever makes the most sense for a department and the discipline, cause they vary. In those to substantive pre tenure reviews, the candidate does put together the dossier, and that that is really looked at but otherwise the annual reviews really provide that necessary feedback of whether they are on track, whether they are responding to the previous review, how it's going . . .

In the following issues, she will talk about faculty development, career advancement, and student success & institutional changes relating to faculty work and development.

SCHOOL OF LEARNING

Making Connections for Meaningful Learning

Have you ever wondered how to foster critical thinking in your students? How can you get the students to make connections in their learning and see the big picture? According to Harpaz, Balik, and Ehenfeld (2004) concept mapping in education can help advance the learning processes and develop skills such as critical thinking, organization of information, understanding complex relationships, and applying the theoretical knowledge to practice. A concept map allows students to visualize as well as conceptualize concepts as a whole rather than in parts. The concept map is one teaching tool, which provides students a way to make links between new knowledge and previous cognitive knowledge. It provides a meaningful learning experience while placing the responsibility for the links on the student.

Concept maps allow for a significant amount of information to be placed on one page providing a simple way for students to view their thoughts and make connecting links between several topics (Gerdeman et.al, 2012). The links between topics should include words or phrases that explain the connections between ideas allowing for faculty to gain valuable insight into student learning (Gerdeman et.al, 2012; Taylor & Littleton-Kearney, 2011).

The challenge to educators comes in how to teach high level thinking skills while using educationally sound, active learning and innovative strategies. The use of concept maps has proven to positively affect the degree of critical thinking and yet provide a meaningful learning experience for the student (Herreid, 2011).

For more information on constructing concept maps and to download concept-mapping software visit: <http://cmap.ihmc.us/>

Gerdeman, J.L., Lux, K., & Jacko, J. (2012). Using concept mapping to build clinical judgment skills. *Nurse Education in Practice*, 13, 11-17.

Harpaz, I., Balik, C., & Ehrenfeld, M. (2004). Concept mapping: An educational strategy for advancing nursing education. *Nursing Forum*, 39(2), 27-36.

TEEC Brown Bag

October 6 @ 12 in SL 221
Transdisciplinary _____

October 28 @ 12 in SL 221
Grant Writing

November 19 @ 12 in SL 221
Classroom Management

January 29 @ 12 in SL 221
Assessing Teaching Effectiveness

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Master of Business Informatics, Maria Voscekova, Reflects on Her NKU Experience

Hi! My name is Maria Voscekova and I am from Bratislava, the capital city of Slovakia. I am in the second year of graduate school here at NKU; finishing my MBI degree in May'15 and my MBA degree in August'15. My life has always been "controlled" by tennis. More so, it opened up great opportunities for me. Given an offer to play for a top 50 Division I school, I packed my things and flew to Huntington, WV in August 2010. Three years later, I celebrated success in the classroom and on the court. I graduated from Marshall University with a degree in International Business while winning more than 100 singles and doubles matches for the Herd.



For my last year of college tennis, I decided to wear the Norse jersey. I was excited to help a newly created Division I tennis team with four freshmen. My position as a senior on such a young team allowed me to develop my leadership skills, eventually securing my role as a team captain. With my 35 singles and doubles wins, I contributed to 7 team season wins. On a more important note, NKU provides me with a great learning experience. The complex curriculum of the MBA program and the technological perspective of business in the MBI program have allowed me to become a well-rounded individual and ultimately support my long-term goal of starting my own business.

It is the community of people in both the academics and athletics that makes my experience at NKU an exceptional one. I not only get to learn from my professors and my fellow classmates' experience, but also from hands on projects with Heritage Bank and NKU Fuel, and networking events such as Cincinnati BI, 24 Hours of Mobile Innovation Contest, or Job Expo. The nomination for Graduate Council provides me with a chance to represent my classmates' opinion. In addition to my professional and academic connections, I have also created relationships from my past NKU tennis career. This has allowed me to participate in the internship with Career Athletes. My time at NKU is slowly coming to the end, and I can conclude that the knowledge and skills I gained, success I celebrated, the memories I created, and the relationships I established better prepare me for the real-world.

FACULTY SPEAKS ABOUT TEACHING



Regents Professor Miriam Steinitz-Kannan joined the NKU faculty in Biological Sciences in 1979. She is a recognized educator for her engagement in service learning and community outreach programs, especially for unrepresented and at-risk students. She received numerous awards for her teaching accomplishments which include the 2011 Milburn NKU Outstanding Professor Award and the 2012 Cincy Magazine's Outstanding Educator. Miriam has graciously agreed to share with us a few of her thoughts about teaching.

“It is a Matter of Inclusion”

Northern Kentucky University puts student success at the core of its mission. How do we as faculty prepare our students and place them in a path to success? Our students come from very diverse backgrounds and we are committed to increase enrollment and retention of under-represented minorities. I strongly believe that in order for students to thrive and succeed, they must have a sense of belonging. They must feel their instructors are accessible, approachable, both in the classroom and outside. We can help them on their journey in gaining their voice and confidence in a number of ways.

First is by encouraging active involvement in the classroom. This can be accomplished through the incorporation of small working “teams.” I encourage students to study in teams, and have a team leader “teach” the material to the rest of the team. Each team has a designated leader for a set amount of time. The leadership then changes to another person in the team. In this way all students, regardless of background, are pushed to take a leadership role and are heard by the rest of their members. I also combine experiential learning with service learning in advanced classes. Student teams design and together carry out projects that can directly benefit the community. Such field experiences foster interconnectedness to classmates, the NKU community and the community at large.

Second is by encouraging students to get involved in undergraduate research, and guiding them into projects they can “own”. Unlike the classroom where students interact with peers of their same year, research brings together upper and lower classmen working often together as part of a research group. They are contributing to their discipline; they have a sense of purpose and usually can attend professional meetings where they have an opportunity to network and make professional contacts.

Third is by encouraging students to join campus student organizations like the National Biology Honor Society, Tri Beta. In academic societies like Tri Beta students form friendships that allow them to study together in study groups. Upper classmen encourage new members to get engaged in research and they share their experiences with them. The societies also provide opportunities for students to present their work and win awards for the student organization. The sense of belonging and contributing to the society is particularly heightened for those students who “win for the team”.

Fourth and last is by encouraging our students to get involved as mentors with under-represented and at-risk middle and high school students who may eventually join NKU. NKU offers several programs that bring high school minority students on campus to get a glimpse of what college offers. One that I have run for the past 10 years is the Latino and ELL Fun with Science camp. Here, high school minority students get hands-on science training and work with undergraduate teaching assistants. The undergraduates often continue to mentor them after the camp. Another program that was started last year by a team of faculty in the College of Arts and Sciences is the “Saturday Program for Access to Rewarding Knowledge” (SPARK). In this program (led by Irene Encarnación and Jennifer Webster) four undergraduates selected as “SPARK Mentors” worked in the fall semester at Holmes high school and Boone County high school. They were mentors to African American and Latino students. They helped select 10 students from each high school who participated in the spring semester “Saturday Program” where different departments in the Arts and Science hosted the students on multiple Saturdays and introduced them to their various disciplines. Students also went on campus tours and received information about admissions and scholarship programs at NKU. Two students who were part of the SPARK program are enrolled this fall at NKU as Biology majors. They have come to our campus already with a sense of belonging.

In summary, by engaging our students inside and outside the classroom in ways where they can make a difference, we help foster in them that sense of inclusion that is needed for a wholesome educational experience.

2015 Spring Faculty Development Workshops

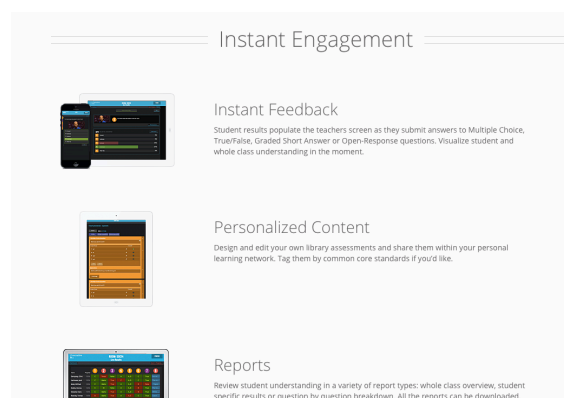
Watch for more information to come on these faculty development workshops – Spring 2015

- Get a Little Help from Your Colleagues - Improving your teaching through peer feedback or coaching.
- Mindfulness and Renewal - Incorporating and Practicing in Your Teaching

TECHNOLOGY TIPS

Want immediate feedback from students? Tired of clickers? Try Socrative...

Socrative is an app that offers teachers real-time feedback on student performance. The app enables professors to engage and assess students with questions and activities on their tablets, laptops or smartphones. The real-time questioning can be multiple-choice, true-false or short answer formats and reports are generated as students respond. Socrative offers instant result aggregation and visualization so that professors can gauge the whole class' current level of understanding. Socrative saves time and is compatible with every web-browser, operating system, and platform for apps, making it super accessible. Learn more about how to use Socrative in your next course by visiting: <http://www.socrative.com/index.php>



TEACHING TIPS

The 'Minute Paper' goes by a variety of names, not to mention a variety of activities also go by this name. Even though this pedagogical tool may sound familiar to some, it will be new to enough instructors to warrant covering. The Minute Paper is a very basic active learning exercise. At the end of a session, ask the students to anonymously answer some variation of these four questions. It should literally take only one minute to complete.

1. What is the most important thing you learned?
2. What remains the most unclear to you?
3. What does the instructor do that best helps you to learn?
4. What could the instructor do to better help you learn?

This brief activity proves useful in a number of ways that can easily be implemented into a fact-to-face or online course. First, instructors get a good sense of what students understood and felt was significant in that class, during that section of material, or whatever students are asked to consider in the first two questions. Before beginning the next session, teachers can reiterate what was important and clear up any misinterpretations or questions. Second, instructors get feedback before the end of the semester, making adjustments more immediately possible. Third, students have an opportunity to offer their opinions about the class, giving them a sense of input, and hopefully buy-in into the course. Addressing their concerns shows instructors acknowledge their feedback and offers a chance to explain or reemphasize the pedagogical reasons behind the structure and rules for the class.

Fourth, minute papers prime students for completing the end-of-semester course evaluation. If they get into the habit of giving feedback and recognize it is valued by the instructor, they may be more likely to not only complete the course evaluation, but also give qualitative feedback. As the university requires the syllabus statement about online course evaluations, instructors might feel that no further mention is necessary. Mentioning the reasons why the evaluation matters to the instructor is important. Telling students that their feedback will help to improve the course the next time around and mentioning supplementing the standard questions with some specific to the course should encourage more extensive and meaningful input. While offering to buy the class pizza as an incentive is a very bad idea, reminding students of the variety of reasons that make completing the evaluation worthwhile is a very good one.