



Center for Teaching and Learning Newsletter

Vol. 14 No. 1

September 2008

Dates to Note!!

Thursday, October 2

Student Engagement and the Strategic Plan
12:15 to 1:15 p.m.
Library 110

Wednesday, October 8

Journal Club: What is Effective Teaching?
Noon to 1 p.m.
Library 110

Wednesday, October 15

Women and Golden Arms: Drug Trafficking in North America 1900-1970
2 to 3 p.m.
St. John Hall 247

Tuesday, October 21

Writing for Learning: How to Help Students Explore Ideas and Course Content
12:15 to 1:15 p.m.
Library 150

Thursday, October 23

The Election: Issues of Poverty and Justice
12:15 to 1:15 p.m.
President's Room,
Carnesecca Arena

Tuesday, October 28

Approaches to Group Work
12:15 to 1:15 p.m.
Library 110

To **RSVP** phone us at ext. 1859 or email us at CTL@stjohns.edu.

Students and the Question of "Happiness"

Vincentian Mission: Opportunity and Responsibility-XVII in the Series

Christopher Vogt (St. John's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, vogtc@stjohns.edu)

In this column, Vincentian Research Faculty from across the University share their experience in actualizing the Mission through their research, teaching and service. Below, Professor Vogt, Associate Professor of Theology, describes the manner in which he leads students to reflect on happiness as a personal and social good. He also opines that "the good life" is a goal of authentic education.

One of the ways St. John's University supports its Vincentian mission is by requiring all undergraduates in the Tobin College of Business to take a course entitled Moral Theology of the Marketplace. Since coming to St. John's in 2001, I have taught more sections of this course than any other. At times, it has been a miserable experience. To put it mildly, undergraduate business majors often are an exceedingly "tough crowd" for a moral theology course. Despite these difficulties, or perhaps because of them, some of the most rewarding moments I have had as a teacher have come from my work among this challenging group.

As I have sought to support the University's mission to promote social justice, I have found it helpful to remember that I must meet students "where they are" morally. Developing a concern for justice—just like the cultivation of any virtue—is a process, and we all find ourselves at varied stages of that process. Many of our students are not immediately able to hear about justice and how it pertains to them. I have found that when one wants to engage students in a conversation about justice one should begin by talking about happiness.

The desire for happiness is something that all people share in common. It serves as the underlying motivation for just about everything we do. Of course, the crucial question is: "What will lead to my happiness?" This question can be engaged by a variety of disciplines: literature, philosophy, theology, etc. Despite the many occasions upon which we might consider this question, I find that most students have never reflected upon it with care. My students seem to assume that if they find a way to earn enough money, happiness will fall into place.

Many people today have an impoverished understanding of the purpose of education. They see our students as customers who come to us with a predefined set of desires; our job is to satisfy those desires. Despite all the talk about "critical thinking" in higher education, few educators see it as their role to help students question the validity of their conception of the good life. A Vincentian education

Center for Teaching and Learning

DIRECTOR:

Maura C. Flannery

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR:

Elaine Carey

ASSISTANT TO THE

DIRECTOR:

Lisa Getman

DEPARTMENTAL

ASSISTANT

Judy Lam

2008-2010 FELLOWS:

Danielle Ezzo

Paula Lazrus

Robert Leston

Charles Livermore

2007-2009 FELLOWS:

Florin Catrina

Sue Ford

Marc Gillespie

Marianallet Mendez

Mary Noe

Susie Pak

Kristin Prevallet

SENIOR FELLOWS:

Laura Gianni Augusto

Barrett Brenton

Elaine Carey

Teresa Danile

Hilmi Elifoglu

Carol Fletcher

Lucy Heckman

Olga Hilas

Aliya Holmes

Nicole Maisch

Joseph Marotta

Mark Meng

Steven Mentz

Stephen P. Miller

Basilio Monteiro

Claire O'Donoghue

Jean-Pierre Ruiz

Sharon See

Kathryn Shaughnessy

Victoria Shoaf

Ellen Tufano

Jay Zimmerman

This newsletter is published monthly during the academic year by the Center for Teaching and Learning.

Managing Editor:

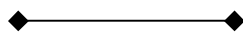
Lisa Getman

must do more. We should take our cue from St. Augustine who taught that happiness is not found via the satisfaction of my preexisting wants, but in learning to desire that which is completely good and which therefore can satisfy completely. Thus we must find ways to help students to scrutinize their plans and desires.

A way of opening up this conversation is to ask students about their sense of purpose in life. A crucial part of education must be to assist students to expand their sense of possibility. St. John's has many first-generation college students who may have never had the freedom to ask themselves whether their work and their lives might come to be about something more than financial stability and comfort. To use theological language, they have never asked whether they might have a vocation.

Toward this end, we should help students to ask themselves: What are my gifts and talents? What do I long to do? What are the needs of my community? Discerning a vocation is about finding congruence among these things. This can mean being a pharmacist who specializes in preparing and delivering treatments for the dying; or being an attorney who pursues public interest law, or being a businessperson who recognizes that business is about profit, but also about something more. The question of vocation encourages students to make connections between their own pursuit of happiness and the common good.

One final conversation about happiness can lead students further toward the consideration of social justice. First, it is necessary to clarify that "happiness" is not merely about good feelings; it is better captured by the Aristotelian term *eudaimonia*, which might be translated as "human flourishing." I ask students what every person needs in order to achieve *eudaimonia*. This is the question of the common good, which Catholic Social Thought defines as "the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily." In considering this question, students must develop a multi-faceted conception of human flourishing and also begin to ask questions about what concrete goods a person needs to achieve such a life (education, a good job, health care, personal safety, etc.). From there they might begin to consider how society might endeavor to provide those goods so as to make possible the flourishing of all members of society. Finally they might consider their own responsibility for nurturing the growth of the common good. Beginning with questions about happiness, they will have begun to understand the nature and importance of justice.



Blackboard 6 Sessions

Join these Blackboard 6 workshops to learn the valuable skills needed to navigate the new Blackboard 6 with ease, in **Sullivan, room 205** from **12:20 to 1:20 p.m.** This room has computers, however, if you have a laptop, it is recommended to bring it to the workshop so you are working on a machine which is familiar to you.

Topics:

Basic Intro, Announcements, Mail and Discussion Board
Students, Files and Backups
Grades, Assignments and Quizzes

Date:

October 14
October 28
November 11

Questions can be directed to Prof. Edith Chasen-Cerreta, Physics Department, St. John's College, at: chasene@stjohns.edu .



Faculty News

September 2008

Dr. Angela Belli (English, bellia@stjohns.edu) published a critical anthology, *Bodies and Barriers: Dramas of Dis-Ease* (The Kent State University Press, 2008); contributed an article "Medical Ethics on Stage" to the Literature, Arts and Medicine Database of New York University (August 2007); served as moderator for the panel, "Medicine and the Media" at the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities (October 2007); delivered a paper, "Witnessing Death on the Modern Stage," at The Pulse of Death Now Conference, Kutscher Memorial Conference at Columbia University (March 2008); and delivered a paper, "Seamus Heaney's Medical Gaze: Reconciliation as Cure in *The Cure At Troy*," at the New York College English Association (April 2008).

Dr. Blase Billack (Pharmaceutical Sciences, billackb@stjohns.edu) published an article, "*In Vitro* Evaluation of the Cytotoxic and Anti-proliferative Properties of Resveratrol and Several of its Analogs," in *Cellular and Molecular Biology Letters* (Summer 2008).

Dr. Elaine Carey (History, careye@stjohns.edu) participated in a panel, "Conjuncture: 1968," at Columbia University (April 2008); co-published "Carrying on the Struggle: El Comit  68," in *NACLA Report on the Americas* special issue, "Against Impunity: The Decline of the Mexican Social Pact" (May/June 2008); and received the Lloyd George Sealy Research Fellowship, John Jay College of Criminal Justice for 2008-2009.

Dr. Irene J. Dabrowski (Sociology & Anthropology, dabrowsi@stjohns.edu) co-presented a paper, "The Quest for Social Intelligence: Classical Inspiration for the Second Enlightenment Period," at the annual conference of the World Future Society in Washington, D.C. (July 2008).

Dr. Robert A. Delfino (Philosophy, delfinor@stjohns.edu) presented a paper, "Science and Natural Theology: Barriers to Dialogue," (http://www.naturaltheology.org/beyondpaley_downloads.html) at the Natural Theology Conference held at Oxford University, UK (June 2008).

Dr. Christopher D. Denny (Theology and Religious Studies, dennyc@stjohns.edu) presented a paper, "Which Holy Child? German Romantic Rivals to Balthasar's Theology of Youth," at the annual meeting of the Catholic Theological Society of America in Miami (June 2008).

Dr. Judith DeSena (Sociology & Anthropology, desenaj@stjohns.edu) edited a collection of readings, *Gender in an Urban World* (Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2008).

Dr. Fernando Egargo (Theology and Religious Studies, egargof@stjohns.edu) published the book, *Community Broadcasting in the Philippines*, which was featured at the Manila International Book Fair in Manila, Philippines (September 2008).

Dr. Hannah Berliner Fischthal (English, fischthh@stjohns.edu) published two reviews: an analysis of Modern Jewish Women Writers in America based on a text edited by Evelyn Avery and critiqued Benjamin Harshav's *Sing Stranger: A Century of American Yiddish Poetry* in *Studies in American Jewish Literature*.

Maura C. Flannery (Computer Science, Mathematics and Science, flannerm@stjohns.edu) published an article, "Three Lives in Biology," in *The American Biology Teacher* (September 2008).

Professor Connie J. Frisch-Cherniak (Fine Arts, frischcc@stjohns.edu) has a one-woman exhibit entitled "Wish You Were Here -- Nature and Landscape Color Photography" at the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Memorial Union Theatre Gallery (September-November 2008).

Professor David Gregory (Law School, gregoryd@stjohns.edu) was an opening panelist at the 19th annual Corporate Counsel "Evolving Workplace"

conference in Las Vegas (April 2008); co-chaired the Catholic Social Science Symposium at the School of Law (October 2007); his "Introduction to the Symposium" and his article "Some Reflections on Labor and Employment Ramifications of Diocesan Bankruptcy Filings" were published in *The Journal of Catholic Legal Studies* (2008) – the article was the basis for his lecture to the Deans and Canon Law Faculty at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome (2008); published "Labor Organizing by Executive Order: Governor Spitzer and the Unionization of Home-Based Child Day-Care Providers" in the *Fordham Urban Law Journal* (2008); appointed to the Steering Committee of Catholic Scholars for Worker Justice and to the Advisory Board of the Faculty of the Professions, University of Adelaide, Australia; was interviewed in *The New York Times* and *Chicago Tribune* on various labor issues: "Parts Maker Talks of Strikebreakers and Labor Abroad" (April 2008).

Dr. Alison Hyslop (Chemistry, hyslopa@stjohns.edu) co-chaired and organized the Undergraduate Research Symposium for the New York Section of the American Chemical Society (May 2008).

Dr. Tina Jupiter (Communication Sciences and Disorders, jupitert@stjohns.edu) presented a paper, "Screening the Elderly using DPOAEs, Pure-tones and HHIE-S," at the 2008 American Academy of Audiology National Convention in Charlotte, NC.

Father Robert Lauder (Philosophy, lauderr@stjohns.edu) received a Lifetime Achievement Award from his alma mater, the Seminary of the Immaculate Conception in Huntington, Long Island (October 2007); and the Cathedral House of Formation in Douglaston, New York, honored him for his dedicated service for more than forty years in fostering vocations to the priesthood with the prestigious Salus Animarum Medal (May 2008).

Dr. Richard Lockshin (Biology, lockshir@stjohns.edu) the journal, *Cell Death & Differentiation*, celebrated his 70th birthday by dedicating an entire issue to the man who clarified the destruction of cells and coined the term programmed cell death (July 2008).

Dr. Vivian Valvano Lynch (English and Speech, lynchv@stjohns.edu) published a review essay, "Able to Meet High Standards in a Single Bound: A Review of Jean Paul Riquelme's (ed.) *Norton Critical Edition of a Portrait of The Artist as a Young Man* by James Joyce," in *The James Joyce Literary Supplement* (Spring 2008); presented a paper, "'What a Falling Off Was There': Critiquing *New Dubliners*, A Collection Celebrating 100 Years of Joyce's *Dubliners*," presented at Re-Nascent Joyce: The XXIst International James Joyce Symposium, Universite Francois-Rabelais, Tours, France (June 2008); chaired a session, "Literary Intersections of Ireland and America," and presented a paper, "Mother-Daughter Tableau: Mary Gordon's Memoir *Circling My Mother*," at the American Conference for Irish Studies (ACIS) National Conference, at St. Ambrose University, Davenport, Iowa (April 2008).

Dr. Anna D. Martin (Economics and Finance, martina@stjohns.edu) co-authored the article, "Risk Shifts Following Sarbanes Oxley: Influences of Disclosure and Governance," in the *Financial Review* (2008).

Dr. Basilio Monteiro (Mass Communication, monteirb@stjohns.edu) published an essay, "New Technologies and the Challenges to the Prevailing Socio-Religious Culture: A Study of the Effect of Blogs on Female Expression in the Middle East," in *Media Development* (March 2008); presented a paper on "The Right to Be Human: ICT and the Universalization of Human Rights" at ACUNS (Academic Council on United Nations System) in Ljubljana, Slovenia (July 2008) and presented "Digital Societies: Shifting ICT Architecture and Challenges to Global Governance" at the ACUNS conference, Bonn, Germany (June 2008).

Dr. John J. Neumann (Economics and Finance, neumannj@stjohns.edu) published "The ETF-Index Pricing Relationship" in the *Journal of Indexes* (May/June 2008).

Dr. Sandra E. Reznik (Pharmaceutical Sciences, rezniks@stjohns.edu) published a paper entitled, "The Endothelin Converting Enzyme-1 (ECE-1)/Endothelin-1 (ET-1) Pathway Plays a Critical Role in Inflammation-Associated Premature Delivery in a Mouse Model," in the *American Journal of Pathology* (2008).

Dr. Richard Stalter (Biology, stalterr@stjohns.edu) published three abstracts: "Seed Production in 40 Vascular Plants Species," "A Preliminary Study of the Vascular Flora of the Levy Preserve, Nassau County, New York," and "A Preliminary Study of the Vascular Flora of Brookhaven National Laboratory, Long Island, New York" in *The Bulletin of the South Carolina Academy of Science*; published "Orchids of Atlantic Coast Barrier Island from North Carolina to New York" in *Southeastern Biology*; and "A 70-year History of Arborescent Vegetation at Inwood Park, Manhattan, New York" in *U.S. Arboriculture & Urban Forestry* (2008).

Dr. Charles Wankel (Management, wankelc@stjohns.edu) organized a 21st century approach to authoring textbooks with 900 coauthors in 90 nations (<http://globally-collaborating.com>) and was invited to report on this to the "Management of Meaning in Organizations," a conference organized by the International Association of Cross-Cultural Competence & Management, in partnership with Rotterdam School of Management RSM/EUR and Poznan University College of Business and Foreign Languages, and gave the keynote presentation, "Global Collaboration: Making the Phrase Mean What it Means" (<http://www.3inconf.pwsbijo.pl>, June 2008); authored a book on inter-organizational

Strategic coordination among anti-communist organizations in the 1980s (St. Martins Press) and a number of Polish language scholarly articles in Polish management journals; and has been a visiting professor to the University of Warsaw and the Polish Academy of Sciences.

Dr. Ann C. Wintergerst (Languages & Literatures, winterga@stjohns.edu) co-presented a workshop on "Cross-Cultural Awareness Activities" at the 42nd International Convention of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages in New York (April 2008); published a co-authored article, "Experiential Activities to Raise Cultural Awareness," in the ICIS Newsletter (April 2008); published an article, "HEIS Discussion Group: How to Raise Cultural Awareness," in the HEIS Newsletter (August 2008); and is listed in the 2008-2009 edition of *Who's Who of American Women*.

Faculty News

If you would like to send an entry to "Faculty News," the deadline for the October issue is **October 3**. We prefer that you email the information to CTL@stjohns.edu. Please have your entries follow the style presented in "Faculty News." Material included in CTL Faculty News will be sent to Dominic Scianna for distribution in a news release.

1968 Film Series

Sponsored by the History Department in St. John's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

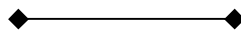
All sessions will take place in the Honor's Lounge, located in the Library in the back of the academic commons area from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m.

Susan Schmidt Horning will present and discuss *Berkeley in the '60s* (2002) on September 24, 2008.

Elaine Carey will present *Canoa* (Mexico, 1976) on October 8, 2008.

Mauricio Borrero will present, *Man of Marble / Czlowiek z marmuru* (Poland, 1976) on October 22, 2008.

Felix Germain will present *Black Girl / La noire de* (Senegal 1966) on November 5, 2008.



Social Networking for Academics

There is a new social networking site designed for academics with the aim of linking researchers in all disciplines. Called Academia it is available at <http://www.academia.edu>, and you can learn more about it in an article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (<http://chronicle.com/wiredcampus/article/3319/new-social-network-hopes-to-catalog-all-researchers-and-their-interests>).

Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Academic Service-Learning but Didn't Have the Time to Ask

Janet E. Mangione (mangionj@stjohns.edu), Melanie Serge-Roth (sergem@stjohns.edu), Louis E. Saavedra (saavedrl@stjohns.edu) and Crystal Vera (verac@stjohns.edu) Academic Service Learning

St. John's University implemented Academic Service-Learning (AS-L) in 1995 with the aim of fulfilling the institution's mission to educate students while providing them with the opportunity to serve others as well.

From the onset, Academic Service-Learning challenged students to serve in order to present the following learning opportunities:

- Assist those in need while gaining academic experience.
- See the City of New York and the greater world as a part of the classroom and over-all learning experience.
- Develop leadership skills.
- Learn and gain insight from individuals reflecting diversity in religion, education, age, income, culture and ethnicity.
- Experience a sense of community with the people served as well as with other students.
- Understand the economic, political and cultural structures of society and how groups and/or individuals are affected.
- Develop a life-long habit of service to others, in light of the vision of St. Vincent de Paul.

In order to more fully reflect the University's mission, vision, strategic goals and initiatives as well as to open up many more avenues for AS-L projects that contribute to the common/public good, the working definition of AS-L has been updated and revised for implementation in Academic Year 2008/2009. Thus the newly revised definition follows:

Academic Service-Learning at St. John's University is a classroom-based program that involves students in some form of required community service activity and uses that activity as a means of understanding course concepts. It is a pedagogical approach whereby students engage in a service activity that benefits the common (public) good. The service activity leads to an emergent focus on topics pertaining to justice issues as well as to the STJ mission and identity through a structured reflection.

In this conceptualization, community is interpreted to include not just neighborhoods but any group or institution anywhere in the world with an organized project goal where profit is not the over-all mission but rather, where social justice and working towards the common (public) good are the major goals or purpose of the venture. That is, any student community service placement and/or project can be considered AS-L provided that the student is not directly involved in a profit-making activity.

In addition, there are Five Validating Factors required for a project to be classified as Academic Service-Learning. These are:

1. The community service must be included as part of an academic course offering.
2. The community service must meet a real and existing need.
3. The student does not receive any financial reward for performing the service.
4. There must be reciprocity between the service site and the student where it is clearly understood that the student becomes one of the beneficiaries of the actions performed. Thus, students must be afforded the experiential learning opportunity to practice, perform and/or observe theories and practical applications of the course content and/or of their discipline.
5. Some form of organized academic service-learning reflection must be included in the course. Reflection is the mechanism that encourages students to link their service experience with course content, and to consider the importance of service to others and the importance of individual participation in the democratic process.

Reflection and reciprocity have been put forward as critical characteristics of AS-L (ASLER, 1993; Commission on National and Community Service, 1993; Dean, 2006; Fusco, 1998; Kendall, 1991; McCarthy 1996; Mintz and Hesser, 1996). Academic Service-Learning educators outline and define reflection as "...the process by which service-learners think critically about their experiences. Reflection can happen through writing,

speaking, listening and reading about the service experience" (Cooper, 2001; Fusco 1998). Mark Cooper, Director of the Volunteer Action Council at Florida International University, expands on this assertion by stating: "Learning happens through a mix of theory and practice, thought and action, observation and interaction. It allows students to learn from themselves" (Cooper, 2001). Complementing this conceptualization of the learning process, the Committee on National and Community Service cites reflection as the meta-cognitive bridge between service (action) and learning (cognition). They go on to state that reflection may include talking or writing "about what the student did and saw during the actual service activity" (1993). The Campus Outreach Opportunity League (COOL) manual entitled, *Into the Streets* (1993), maintains the importance of reflection, including utilizing journals and papers. Kolb's experiential learning model (1984) emphasizes reflection as an important tool students use to relate abstract concepts through concrete experiences. Thus, reflection plays an important role in helping students make sense of information (Silcox, 1993). Reciprocity between the server (students) and those being served, the second essential characteristic of AS-L, ensures that the students are not placed in community settings solely to meet the class learning outcomes but rather to make certain that the service meets and seeks to address a real need, while providing a structured opportunity intentionally designed to enhance student learning. Thus, AS-L provides for all constituents to define their needs in a mutually beneficial activity (Jacoby, 1996).

The duration of time that academic service-learners actually spend completing a project is not the critical issue for instituting Academic Service-Learning in a class. Participation in AS-L does not mean that a long, extended service project is warranted. In fact, the Council for the Advancement of Professional Standards in Higher Education states that "even one-time experiences that address community needs and that are designated to achieve specific student learning and development outcomes can appropriately be called service-learning" (Dean, 2006). The Office of Academic Service-Learning has a plethora of community service sites that would welcome one-day or short-term projects.

From the grassroots educational movement that got underway in the latter half of the last century, AS-L has evolved into an international phenomenon involving students and faculty from grammar school to graduate school. "Service-learning enables colleges and universities to meet their goals for student learning and development while making unique contributions to addressing community, national and global needs. ...Service-learning encourages students to do things *with* others rather than *for* them" (Dean, 2006). As such, the Vincentian nature of our University implies collaboration between all members of the University "family", particularly faculty and their students, as a locally to globally "engaged" campus.

For further information concerning redefining or adding an Academic Service-Learning component to any class, please contact any of the administrators listed below.

Janet E. Mangione, Associate Director, ASL, Bent Hall Garden Level, room 5, ext. 6268, mangionj@stjohns.edu
Melanie Serge-Roth, Assistant Director, ASL, Bent Hall Garden Level, room 7, ext. 5947, sergem@stjohns.edu
Louis E. Saavedra, ASL Coordinator, Queens, Bent Hall Garden Level, room 6, ext. 6499, saavedrl@stjohns.edu
Crystal Vera, ASL Coordinator, SI, Flynn Hall, ext. 4119, verac@stjohns.edu

Works Cited

- ASLER (1993). Standards of Quality School-Based Service-Learning. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 26, 71-73.
- Campus Outreach Opportunity League (1993). *Into the Streets*. St. Paul, MN: COOL Press
- Commission on National and Community Service (COOL) (1993). *What You Can Do for Your Country*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.
- Cooper, Mark (2002). Florida International University Homepage. *Reflection: Getting Learning Out of Reflection* [On-line]. Available: <http://www/fiu.edu/~time4chg/Library/reflect.html>
- Fusco, D. (Winter 1998). Transforming Service-Learning: An Argument for the Radical Inclusion of Young People. *National Society for Experiential Education Quarterly*, 31-35.
- Jacoby, B. (Ed). (1996). *Service-Learning in Higher Education: Concepts and Practices*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Kendall, J. (1991). Principles of Good Practice in Combining Service and Learning. *Journal of Cooperative Education*, 28, 93-98.
- Kolb, D.A. (1984). *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- McCarthy, M.D. (1996). One-Time and Short Term Service-Learning Experiences. In B.Jacoby (ed.) *Service-Learning in Higher Education: Concepts and Practices* (pp. 113-134). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Mintz, S.D. & Hesser, G.W. (1996). Principles of Good Practice in Service-Learning. In B. Jacoby (ed.) *Service-Learning in Higher Education: Concepts and Practices* (pp. 26-52). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Silcox, H. (1993). *A How to Guide to Reflection: Adding Cognitive Learning to Community Service Programs*. Philadelphia: Brighton Press.

An Academic Fantasy

Joseph A. Giacalone (The Peter J. Tobin College of Business, giacaloj@stjohns.edu)

As a teacher, I have always looked forward to the start of each new academic year in September. I relish the challenge of facing a new group of students and having an influence on their personal and professional development. Here in the Northeast, September introduces one of the prettiest times of the year. The colors of the season dazzle the eyes and lift the spirit. I am also a sports fan. The baseball season is in full swing, the football season is getting underway, and basketball isn't far behind.

Yet, the excitement of the fall term's onset has a dark side for me. I have become a very envious person—envious of the coaches of major NCAA sports. No, it's not their high salaries, TV contracts, sneaker deals, celebrity status, or media exposure that makes me jealous. It is their virtually absolute power to get their charges into a state of readiness for the new season. They know the need for their players to be in excellent physical shape and mentally ready for competition. They know that their players must understand the rules of the game and the plays in the playbook if the team is going to have any chance of success. They know, too, that most of this physical and mental preparation must take place *before* the season begins. This is so even if it means, as in the case of football, returning to the campus several weeks before the fall semester begins for the rest of the student body. The good coach knows that once the games begin, it will be difficult to compensate for a lack of pre-season preparation. Of course, the players must still practice throughout the season and the coach must try to improve the team until the final game is completed. But it is understood that a good start is critical to a good finish.

The roots of my envy date back to the period of my career when I served as Dean of a collegiate school of business. I had a fantasy that stays with me to this very day. I fantasized that the Dean could send a mid-summer letter to all new and returning students requiring them to report for two weeks prior to the beginning of the fall semester for training camp. After all, the football coach could do this without question and any prospective player who dared not to show would probably be an ex-player. The athletic program recognizes the value of this pre-season training. Why, I fantasized, couldn't the same be done for the academic program? The faculty could design a two-week regimen of intense academic activity. Analytical reading and writing exercises, mathematics fitness, library and computer classes, oral presentations, and other similar skill development could be included.

Perhaps, this academic regime wouldn't be as gut-wrenching as the infamous "two-a-day" workouts of the football squad or the "voluntary" fitness regime of running the stadium steps that I've seen the basketball players do. But the academic training camp would surely send the message that once the term begins the game is on. Too often, students spend the early days of a semester shopping-for courses, teachers, books, wardrobes, parking stickers, etc. In fact, some students avoid buying books for weeks, if at all. Then, there is a round of social activities. Getting re-acquainted with classmates and sharing summer experiences, work, romance, travel, or otherwise, also have high priority for many. Not that these activities are without some merit. It's just that many students entering or returning to college are not "ready to play." They are academically out-of-shape. They feel no sense of urgency and assume that there is plenty of time until final exams. This attitude would be totally unacceptable to a coach and any such would-be team member would be in serious jeopardy. The good coach can't wait until mid-season for players to be ready. Is it unreasonable for the teacher to expect students to be ready when classes begin? Could the academic program have the power of the athletic program to get its participants ready for what lies ahead? Could a Dean survive mandating such pre-semester academic preparation? Could this fantasy of mine ever become a reality?

