Dates to Note!!

Saturday, May 14
Commencement Exercises
Staten Island Campus
10 a.m.
Lawn adjacent to the Kelleher Center

Sunday, May 15
Commencement Exercises
For both Queens and Manhattan students
12 p.m.
The Great Lawn

Thursday, May 19
Session on the Personnel Action Form (PAF)
2 to 3:30 p.m.
Marillac Hall 314

Thursday, May 26
Thursday, June 2
Thursday, June 9
Thursday, June 16
Thursday, June 23
Thursday, June 30
Summer Journal Club
12:45 to 2 p.m.
Bent Hall 447

Thursday, August 11
Thursday, August 18
Thursday, August 25
10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Conversations in Teaching
Location TBA

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

Student Apathy, Mediated Culture, and the Market Economy

Flora Keshishian (St. John’s College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, keshishf@stjohns.edu)

During the first day of classes this semester, while discussing my course syllabus with the students, I couldn’t help but notice what I interpreted as apathy in their body language—slouching, doodling, daydreaming, etc., more than I had ever seen. So I spent quite a few minutes discussing the importance of their full presence in the classroom and the critical role of their verbal and nonverbal communication in the learning-teaching process. I told them what I had noticed in their body language and asked whether my perception was accurate. One student, with a somewhat sad and angry tone (as if resenting how he felt), responded: “Professor, to be honest with you, we hate being in the classroom. The only reason we’re in school is because we need to get a degree so we can make money.” Puzzled, I looked at the student, asking myself what could possibly contribute to such a lack of interest in education, especially on the first day of classes. In response to the student’s comment, I asked a hypothetical question: “What happened to the idea that you go to school to become better human beings?” I tried to romanticize education as a process that prepares students to help improve life, not just as a means to make money. A few of the students listened inquisitively (as if hearing those words for the first time) while others looked like they were daydreaming (perhaps about making money).

Student apathy is nothing new, of course, but it has become more pervasive in our society, and needs to be addressed. In this essay, I will point to a major reason behind the problem and suggest a remedy. Many factors contribute to students’ lack of interest in learning through formal education. To begin with, learning takes courage, discipline, humility, and work. It involves challenging one’s beliefs and preconceived notions, and admitting in front of many near-strangers that there are many things we don’t know. The classroom environment with its rules, time restrictions, codes of conduct, etc., can sometimes be a deterrent. However, more so is the case for many younger students who were born into a society characterized by omnipresent fun communication gadgets such as the computer, cell phone and, of course, television—the most entertaining, exciting, memorable, and trusted teacher they had before entering kindergarten. Naturally, when in college, these students often expect the classroom to be an extension of these media: pure entertainment. No wonder teachers feel pressured to cope with this expectation, which partly explains the use of state-of-the-art technology in the classroom (and I am not saying that learning should not be fun nor that we don’t need communication technology in the classroom). I had a student who kept disrupting the class by constantly talking to a classmate. When I asked her why she
had taken the course, she replied matter-of-fact, “to have fun and maybe to learn something.” I pointed out to her that she had had the order reversed: that she had taken the course to learn something and, through her participation, to have fun in the process. She looked at me in disbelief and with great disappointment.

I do not blame the students in the contemporary society for resenting being in the classroom or expecting their classes to be nothing but fun. However, to help students, we ought to clarify some realities for them. We ought to remind them that, as members of society, we are all affected by the dominant culture of which we are members. As a complex phenomenon, culture is influenced by several factors, among which, I would argue, economics is the most influential, simply because our basic survival needs (e.g., food, shelter) depend on it. The impact of the economy is especially significant in a profit-driven economic system such as that of the United States, where almost everything is considered a commodity and everybody a potential consumer, e.g., education as a commodity, and students as clientele. In such a market economy, making lots of money—quickly, and super-consuming, which go hand in hand, are presented to the public as two of the most cherished values. They are conveyed to us by the multi-billion-dollar profit-driven media industry—an ally of the system, through different programs, commercials, magazines, and movies, among other cultural texts. We have no shortage of programs that revere the rich and famous (most of them in show business, some of them high school dropouts who became rich overnight). Just as we have no shortage of commercials that bombard the viewer with their motto: ultimate happiness is in endless super-consumerism, among many other harmful messages. Books such as the Plug-in Drug (Marie Winn, 1978) and Amusing Ourselves to Death (Neil Postman, 1983), with self-explanatory titles, speak to the negative impact of television on society. Now, how many popular television programs, movies or books can we name that truly value education, educators, and personal growth? Lack of such messages (and of course the low income of educators, at least compared to that of the idolized rich and famous) in our society, make schooling seem boring and unnecessary if not absurd.

Through different strategies we need to help students realize that, to varying degrees, we are all “produced” by society. For example, many people will not study a subject or do a kind of work they enjoy, but that which will help bring money. In other words, we lead our lives mostly by the imperatives of the market. We ought to help students understand the harmful impact of the profit-driven media—which emphasizes money, consumerism, instant gratification, and gives a false image of the globe—on the viewer’s expectation, self-concept, perception or state of mind, and worldview. We need to make them aware of the myth, that money is the most important thing in life and endless material possession the ultimate path to happiness. For, such a myth goes against the delayed gratification inherent in education and the process of learning. They cannot afford to overlook the importance of gaining knowledge and learning to question: two necessary ingredients in creating and maintaining democracy, and a tool by which to make a difference. We need to constantly remind them that a healthy society consists of healthy-minded members who want to acquire knowledge and self-realization so they can do good for their community, society, as well as for themselves, and thereby achieve deeper satisfaction and longer-lasting happiness no money can buy.
Dr. Howard Abadinsky (Criminal Justice and Legal Studies, abadinsh@stjohns.edu) served as an expert witness for the prosecution in Ontario in a precedent-setting case against the Hell's Angels Motorcycle Club; published the ninth edition of Probation and Parole Theory & Practice (Prentice Hall).

Professor Linda Butti (Fine Arts, buttil@stjohns.edu) is exhibiting in the “Silver” show Newhouse Gallery, Snug Harbor Cultural Center, SI and spoke on a panel, "Womens Artists In a Suburban Context," at the opening reception (April-May 2005); participated at a three-person show at the Canajoharie Art Library and Museum (January-March 2005) and in a group show, “Women in the Arts Foundation,” at the Taller Boricua Gallery in the Hispanic Cultural Center (February-March 2005).

Professor Diane Cady (English, cadyd@stjohns.edu) was awarded a W.M. Keck Foundation and Fletcher Jones Foundation fellowship at the Huntington Library.

Dr. Elaine Carey (History, careye@stjohns.edu) presented a paper, “Selling is more of a Habit than Using:”Gendering Narcotraficantes, 1930-1960,” at the Latin American Studies Association Meeting in Las Vegas, NV (October 2004); gave the final talk, “Los dueños del mundo: Power and Masculinity in 1968 Mexico” for Smith College’s Women, Race, and Culture Lecture Series (April 2005); was selected to participate in the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) summer seminar for college teachers on “Human Rights in the Age of Globalization.”

Dr. Jose Centeno (Speech, Communication Sciences, and Theatre, centenoj@stjohns.edu) presented two papers, “Multidisciplinary Theoretical Bases for Language Rehabilitation with Bilingual Aphasic Individuals” and “Studying Language Disorders in Bilingual Speakers: Theoretical Principles, Challenges, and Implications,” at the 5th International Symposium on Bilingualism, Barcelona, Spain (March 2005); and published an article, “Working with bilingual individuals with aphasia: The case of a Spanish-English bilingual client” in the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association Division 14: Perspectives on Communication Disorders and Sciences in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Populations (March 2005).

Professor Rita Dunn (Administration and Instructional Leardership dunnr@stjohns.edu) co-authored an article with Dr. Honigsfeld of Molloy College: “Academic Achievement Level and Learning Styles: An International Comparative Study of Adolescents in Fume Countries,” published in the Journal of Global Awareness (Fall 2004).


Professor Thomas D. Giordano (Administration and Economics, giordant@stjohns.edu) co-authored And Justice for All: The Complete Small Claims Handbook, with his son, Daniel A. Giordano (Looseleaf Law Publications).

Professor David Gregory (Law, gregoryd@stjohns.edu) attended by invitation the annual Catholic Common Ground conference, Arlington, VA; presented a paper on comparative labor at the Irish Association of Law Teachers annual conference, Donegal, Ireland; provided opening remarks for United Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten’s talk at the School of Law (March 2005); and presented a paper on Blessed Frederick Ozanam, founder of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, at the Catholic Intellectual Tradition and the Good Society conference at the University of St. Thomas, Minneapolis (April 2005).
Dr. Maura C. Flannery (Computer Science, Mathematics and Science, flannerm@stjohns.edu) published an article, “Birds: Strange and Not So Strange,” in The American Biology Teacher (March 2005).

Dr. Peggy Jacobson (Speech, Communication Sciences and Theatre, jacobsonp@stjohns.edu) presented a poster (with graduate student Yesenia Phillips), “Spanish and English Morphology in Sequential Bilingual Children with Typical and Atypical Development,” at the International Symposium on Bilingualism, Barcelona, Spain (March 2005) and at the annual meeting of the New York State Speech-Language and Hearing Association in Huntington, NY (April 2005); also presented a poster (with undergraduate student Karece Lopez) “Grammaticality Judgments of Past Tense in Williams Syndrome: A case study” at the NYS Speech-Language and Hearing Association.

Dr. Flora Keshishian (Speech, Communication Science and Theatre, keshishf@stjohns.edu) presented a workshop titled “You Cannot Not Communicate” on the Staten Island campus (March 2005).

Dr. Mary Ann Maslak (Early Childhood, Childhood and Adolescent Education, maslakm@stjohns.edu) presented two papers: “An Exploratory Study of Teachers’ Perspectives of Factors that Influence Tibetan Refugee Students’ Ethnic Identity” at the Association of Asian Studies conference in Chicago, IL and “The Dichotomy between Theoretical Frameworks and Practical Policies: Realizations of Female Education in EFA Policy” at the American Educational Research Association Meeting in Montreal, Canada (March 2005).

Dr. Robert J. Mockler (Management, mocklerr@stjohns.edu) co-authored “Strategically Focused Enterprise Knowledge Management” which was published in Encyclopedia of Information Science and Technology (January 2005); also co-authored and presented “Contingency Decision Modeling in Small Business Planning Situations” at the CIBER Research Institute, College Teaching and Learning Conference, Annual Meeting, Lake Buena Vista, FL (January 2005).

Professor Stephanie Navon Jacobson (Fine Arts, jacobson@stjohns.edu) exhibited at the Center for Contemporary Printmaking, Norwalk, CT in the Fifth Biennial International Miniature Print Exhibition (April-May 2005).

Dr. Marilyn Nichols, SSJ (Theology and Religious Studies, nicholsm@stjohns.edu) as a member of the American Teilhard Association Board, helped to plan “TEILHARD 2005” which commemorated the 50th Anniversary of Teilhard’s death (April 2005).

Dr. Dereck Owens (English, owensd@stjohns.edu) put together a panel at the Conference on College Composition and Communication in San Francisco featuring two former St. John’s English majors: Roseanne Gatto and Tara Roeder (March 2005); co-authored with Claude Hurlbert and Robert Yagelski a critique of the above mentioned conference titled "Making 4Cs Matter More" in Writing on the Edge (Spring 2005).

Dr. Miguel Roig (Psychology, roigm@stjohns.edu) presented a paper with Amanda Marks (honors psychology major from the SI campus) titled “An analysis of academic dishonesty statements in a sample of psychology course syllabi” and also presented a paper titled “A Faculty/Student research contract?” at the symposium: Ethics in Teaching, Practice, and Research at the 76th Annual Meeting of the Eastern Psychological Association, Boston, MA, (March 2005); gave an invited talk titled “Academic dishonesty: An examination of plagiarism” to the faculty at Nazareth College in Rochester, NY (March 2005).

Dr. Richard Stalter (Biological Science, stalterr@stjohns.edu) was selected by the American Biographical Institution, Man of Achievement Award for Great Minds of the 21st Century (2005).

Dr. Konrad Tuchscherer (History, tuchschk@stjohns.edu) was awarded an Andrew W. Mellon Research Fellowship to support his ongoing research on West Africa (Liberia).

Professor Jeffrey Weiser (Communications, Journalism, and Media Studies, weiserj@stjohns.edu) has been nominated in the Best newscaster category in the 2005 New York A.I.R. Awards for excellence in the New York Radio Market.

Dr. Gregory Wilson (English, wilson@stjohns.edu) presented “‘A Spectacle of Strangeness’: Liminality...
How Does One Teach Mathematics to Students Who Have Such a Negative Mindset Toward the Subject?

Marilyn Dono-Koulouris (St. John’s College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, donokoum@stjohns.edu)

As each new semester approaches, I think about the familiar whimpers that all new students utter as I go around the room asking each and every one of them about their previous mathematics experience. Statements such as, “I hate math,” “I can’t do math,” “I am not good at math,” “why do I have to take math, I am not going to be an engineer or a math teacher” are just some of the thoughts that are related during the onset of the semester. Although I try to assure them that math is fun to learn and they will be much better off knowing sets, functions, Cartesian graphs, distance formulas, slopes, and the several other pertinent topics that are covered in College Mathematics, I still get that cross-eyed look that says: “what, is she crazy?” I go on to tell them that we will explore all the required topics working through each and every formula, and we will do it with the basic tools of math which includes the textbook, a notebook, a pen or pencil, and, of course, the chalkboard. I pause for a few moments knowing what the next question will be and then several hands begin waving in the air. Knowing our students, being as articulate as they are, one finally yells out from the back of the room – “what, I’m away?” at the 39th Annual International Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages Convention, San Antonio, TX (March- April 2005).

Dr. Jamie Chieh-Mei Wu (Fine Arts, wuc@stjohns.edu) gave a solo recital at Messiah Lutheran Church (April 2005).

Dr. Ann C. Wintergerst (Languages and Literatures, winterga@stjohns.edu) published an article (with co-author Dr. Andrea DeCapua, NYU) entitled “Assessing and Validating a Learning Styles Instrument” in System: An International Journal of Educational Technology and Applied Linguistics (March 2005); led a discussion session (with B. Reitbauer, Fordham University), “What Will They Do While I’m Away?,” at the 39th Annual International Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages Convention, San Antonio, TX (March- April 2005).

If you would like to send an entry to “Faculty News,” the deadline for the September issue is August 16. We prefer that you email the information to CTL@stjohns.edu. But if that is not possible, then send a typed copy of your announcement to our office located in Bent Hall, room 281. We reserve the right to edit all material received.

Material included in CTL Faculty News will be sent to Jody Fisher for distribution in a news release.

How Does One Teach Mathematics to Students Who Have Such a Negative Mindset Toward the Subject?

Marilyn Dono-Koulouris (St. John’s College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, donokoum@stjohns.edu)

As each new semester approaches, I think about the familiar whimpers that all new students utter as I go around the room asking each and every one of them about their previous mathematics experience. Statements such as, “I hate math,” “I can’t do math,” “I am not good at math,” “why do I have to take math, I am not going to be an engineer or a math teacher” are just some of the thoughts that are related during the onset of the semester. Although I try to assure them that math is fun to learn and they will be much better off knowing sets, functions, Cartesian graphs, distance formulas, slopes, and the several other pertinent topics that are covered in College Mathematics, I still get that cross-eyed look that says: “what, is she crazy?” I go on to tell them that we will explore all the required topics working through each and every formula, and we will do it with the basic tools of math which includes the textbook, a notebook, a pen or pencil, and, of course, the chalkboard. I pause for a few moments knowing what the next question will be and then several hands begin waving in the air. Knowing our students, being as articulate as they are, one finally yells out from the back of the room – “what, no calculators.” Smiling and scanning my eyes from student to student I politely tell them, “no calculators.” After several sighs from the students I spend the remainder of the class telling them the reasons why I do not permit calculators in my math classes.

Math is not just about getting the correct answer, but what path was taken to get there. Everyone needs to study math, not just to learn the quadratic equation or how to find derivatives but to become a well-rounded individual who is disciplined and one who is able to follow a given set of instructions to arrive at the correct answer and to know how they got there. Over the past several years, schools have been talking about getting students to the point where they can think critically by reading passages and drawing conclusions from what was read. That holds true for math as well. Students need to be taught math utilizing their critical thinking skills so conclusions can be drawn from the steps taken to arrive at the final answer. When a student is confident with a given topic and understands the path that was taken to attain the correct answer, then and only then should that student be allowed to utilize a calculator. What good is it if all one can do is press buttons but never know the reasons why they got that answer. A perfect example of this is when a student is doing a problem and cannot multiply two numbers by hand and does not even know how to begin to find the answer. It takes a lot of work to show the students how to find the answers without a calculator, but what the heck, that’s why we are in the field of education – to educate. I go on to tell the students not to be afraid of math and if they get the wrong answer at first it is
not the end of the world as long as they are becoming familiar with the process of solving the problems. I let them know that math is fun and once they start looking at the problems as puzzles or mysteries to be solved they will start having fun. Within a few weeks the students start believing and get involved in the process.

As each new topic is presented I assure the class that this is exciting and we are having fun. When they get stuck with their basic mathematics skills such as adding, subtracting, and multiplying, I let them know that their fingers and toes were given to them to solve math problems. They have a chuckle or two and move forward. Every now and then I tell a little story that coincides with the given topic and that adds to the excitement of the class. The delivery, the professor’s attitude, the belief in the student’s ability to understand and the classroom dynamics is what makes a good, productive math class. I enjoy solving the problems with students and I let them know it. They are allowed to work out problems individually, with another student, or in small groups so they are comfortable. The majority of the negative statements that were so apparent at the beginning of the semester start to fade and by the end of that same semester the students not only understood what was taught, but start to like the subject and develop the confidence that they can do math. Isn’t this our ultimate goal as educators?

Is Online Better than Face-to-Face?
Susan Glanz (College of Professional Studies, glanzs@stjohns.edu)

The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, a philanthropic nonprofit institution, was established in 1934 by Alfred Pritchard Sloan, Jr., then President and Chief Executive Officer of the General Motors Corporation. The Foundation programs are focused around five areas, one of which is called Education and Careers in Science and Technology. One of the programs under this heading is Learning Outside the Classroom. The goal of this program, which was begun in 1992, “is to make available high quality learning, education and training, anytime and anywhere, for those motivated to seek it. The program is based on Asynchronous Learning Networks (ALN) through which a learner uses Internet access for interaction with instructors, classmates, and course materials.”i The Sloan Consortium (Sloan-C) is a syndicate of organizations and institutions committed to online education. It has over 700 colleges as members and associate members, one of which is St. John’s University.

This March, I participated in an online conference organized by the foundation. The conference titled “How Online Can Be Better Than On-Ground: Constructivism, Collaboration, Community” had four presenters and live chats. The four presentations took three and a half hours, and the live chat was about an hour long, the discussion board will be kept alive for the rest of the month. All presentations and the chat were recorded, so issues raised and solutions offered could be reviewed.

On March 2nd, pre-workshop activities were organized to introduce participants to Moodle and Elliminate Live! Moodle is a software package for producing internet-based courses and web sites. Elliminate Live! is an interactive, live eLearning and Web conferencing tool. It took me about half an hour to download the software and to set it up on my computer. It took me only minutes to get familiar with the site and the conference room. (Coffee and snack were on the house.)

The first presenter was Karen Swan from Kent State University. Her presentation, A Constructivist Model for Thinking About Learning Online, provided the theoretical underpinning for the conference. She defined and summarized the various schools of constructivist thought. Constructivism is the idea that learners construct knowledge for themselves - each learner individually (and socially) constructs meaning - as he or she learns. Constructivists believe that learning is an active process in which the learner uses sensory inputs, and constructs meaning out of them. Constructivism holds that learning is a social activity: learning is

---

associated with each individual’s connection with teachers and peers. Karen Swan argued that learner-centered online teaching is constructivist, that is, it must build on the knowledge, skill-sets, attitudes and beliefs that students bring to the class.

Jim Theroux’s (University of Massachusetts) presentation, The Real Time Case Method: The Internet Creates the Potential for New Pedagogy, was an example of hands-on use of the Internet as an educational tool. The RTCM is similar to the well-known Harvard University Case Method. The internet version uses a similar approach where the creation and teaching of a business scenario is produced and analyzed instantaneously as company events occur. Twelve universities participated simultaneously in the project. Students were given background information about the company, and a faculty member from each participating university was available to help answer questions raised by the students. A full-time case writer was placed inside a new, high-growth company to document the day-to-day decision-making of its management. By utilizing the Internet, important company information was delivered to students immediately on a secure password protected website. Students analyzed the problems and offered solutions to the company. 88% of the students evaluated this RTCM tool positively, and the feedback from participating faculty was also positive, most emphasizing the collaborative aspect of this course.

Barry Bisson’s (University of New Brunswick) presentation, A Case Study in Blended Learning: Leveraging Technology in Entrepreneurship Education, was also a report on a pilot project in online entrepreneurship education. It was a collaborative effort among five faculty members at three Canadian universities. The students were graduate engineering students. The course employed a variety of activities: reading assignments, guest speakers, workshops, lectures, case studies, and a business simulation game. Although the title of the presentation implied that teaching was blended, that is, regular face-to-face meeting alternating with online instruction, this was not the case. Blended in this case meant the mixing of teaching tools, the classes met only in cyberspace, both synchronously and asynchronously. 71% of the students evaluated this format positively.

Albert Ingram’s (Kent State University) presentation, Engagement in Online Learning, defined engagement to mean three things: deep attention meaning concentration on the task to be accomplished, effective cognitive processes meaning individual problem solving, and social processes meaning interactions between students and instructor and among students. Ingram defined online learning communities as groups engaged in teamwork, collaborative learning and mutual commitment to the task. To evaluate the effectiveness of the online courses by measuring student engagement and creation of learning-communities, Ingram also looked at some measurement tools used by various universities.

The two presentations (Bisson’s and Theroux’s) discussing courses were interesting, but did not answer some of the issues that I face with my online classes. The students enrolled were graduate students with a better understanding of their own goals and better organizational skills, not undergraduate students in an introductory course. My students often have the misconception that online classes are easy. They start the term believing that the work for web classes can be done at their pace – that the course is self-paced, and they believe that they don’t have to interact with other students. The students also often believe that the instructor will “teach” everything needed, including all technology-related issues. All presenters emphasized that various tools must be used to engage the students. The two papers discussing courses emphasized the benefits of highly interactive discussions, the value of group work, and the availability of enriched course materials. Other benefits all presenters emphasized, tools that I also use, were the many types of interactive learning aids on the course sites (e.g., flash cards, immediate feedback tests, and PowerPoint presentations). Another advantage of online courses that the presenters discussed was the immediate feedback that can be given to the students by providing greater access to instructors. Attending the virtual conference was worthwhile.
Why Not Try a Learning Community?
Maura C. Flannery (College of Professional Studies, flannerm@stjohns.edu)

The question in the title is addressed primarily to those who teach core curriculum courses for first-year students. The programs of incoming freshman are created by the Freshmen Center so it's possible to have, for example, a Discover New York course paired with an English or history or science core course and have the same students programmed into both courses. Julie Upton and I did just this last fall, linking Julie's DNY course with my Scientific Inquiry. We shared the same students, except for a few in each of our courses who were not signed up for the other course due to last-minute schedule changes.

We did not do a great deal to coordinate our syllabi or assignments, though we referred to the other course in each of our syllabi. Also, I gave a reading assignment on birds in New York City, and Julie commented on birds in church architecture. When Cynthia Chambers did the information literacy component, she did a search involving birds. We also referred to the other course and the other instructor in our teaching, and there were incidental crossovers as well, in part because the courses were scheduled back to back. An injured bird that was found during an on-campus field trip in Julie’s class was brought to my classroom for resuscitation. (Yes—the bird survived and eventually flew out the window, but this does NOT mean that I am planning to run an animal shelter in the CTL.)

While the sample was small, and any evidence we collected was anecdotal, I do think it is more than coincidence that no one withdrew from either section. We ended the semester with all the students we had at the beginning (after the first week of class switching). I cannot recall this ever happening in the past, and my overall mean for the SIR II evaluation from this class was considerably higher than it has ever been before. Perhaps students were more interested in class because they knew that the two instructors shared ideas and problems, and cared about them. Also, the students saw their peers in two classes so they may have felt a greater need to show up and do the work. In any case, we are going to do another learning community next fall, and plan to go a step further and have more shared topics and assignments.

If you and a colleague teach freshmen core courses and would like to try something low-risk as we did, call James Keane in the Freshman Center at ext. 5530 or email him at keanej1@stjohns.edu. He is also involved in the Living and Learning Communities in the Residence Halls and can discuss participation in this program as well.

I became interested in learning communities for two reasons. First, there is a great deal of evidence that they increase student success, satisfaction, and retention. Second, and equally important, I saw them as an opportunity to work with a colleague and share ideas, to force myself to stretch intellectually and to look at the world through a different disciplinary lens. The fact that I plan to continue to participate indicates how I feel about my first learning community experience.

If you would like more information about learning communities, a good place to start is the website of the Washington Center at Evergreen University (http://www.evergreen.edu/washcenter/). The Center is noted for its work in this area. They suggest one way to test the learning community idea is for you and a colleague to design a shared assignment. In such a case, you wouldn’t have to be teaching the same students, so you wouldn’t be limited to freshman courses. And with electronic communication, it’s easy for students in different courses to work together.

A Librarian Recommends

This month, our librarian cites two articles from Inside Higher Ed. One deals with "Building Student Interest in Science" (http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2005/04/19/engage) and lists a number of ways Central Washington University has increased student retention in the sciences. The second article, "Making Student Life Educational" (http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2005/03/30/colgate), is about novel events the Residence Education program at Colgate University has developed to engage students in learning outside the classroom.