Engaging Students in their Own Assessment
Kristin Prevallet (Institute for Core Studies, prevallk@stjohns.edu)

St. Vincent lived by Christ’s words: “it is in giving that one receives” is central to our mission as teachers at St John’s University. Aside from the more philosophical implications of this statement to our lives, these famous words can be interpreted quite literally. After all, we are duty-bound to “give” grades every semester—but often what we “receive” is this:

Dear Professor – I’m not sure why you gave me a B-, but my scholarship depends on my GPA and I’d appreciate it if you’d change my grade to an A-.

I inevitably receive several variations on this message at the end of every semester, and my heart always sinks. How could this student possibly think that his work in the class deserved an A? Did I somehow mislead him by not making my expectations crystal clear? What could I have done differently to see this student through the process? In spite of inwardly feeling terrible, my response is typically matter-of-fact:

Dear S------ As was made clear on the syllabus, attendance and participation make up 40% of your grade. You missed six classes, and although you wrote a very good final essay, you rarely participated in class discussions. Technically, I should have given you a C-. Would you like me to re-evaluate your grade?”

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Needless to say, I am tired of this conversation. This semester I have taken a silent vow to ensure that not one of my 75 students will be surprised by his/her grade at the end of the semester. And perhaps with the University’s prerogative to lower attrition and raise engagement, it’s a good time for all of us to reflect on our assessment practices, and consider how they affect – positively and negatively – our students and their success at St John’s.

Although the traditional divide between professor and student has worked for many generations, it assumes that students are prepared to take responsibility for their work in the classroom. They are expected to read the syllabus, keep up with the assignments, and be able to fulfill the requirements. But there are always a certain number of students who receive less than satisfactory grades and are completely baffled about why. Some of them write emails to us at the end of the semester – but I have a sneaking suspicion that there are many more who keep their disappointment to themselves. Obviously, these students simply didn’t do the things that were expected of them.
Yet, if we are expected to play a more active role in our student's lives, then perhaps we need to shift our pedagogy towards helping them along a bit more.

Brian Huot, a known composition theorist, takes the position that teachers need to become “more conscious of our theories concerning assessment.” Although his audience is teachers of writing, his call to become more conscious has cross-curricular implications. In trying to tap into what it means to “give” grades, there is a simple reflection exercise that I found helpful in assessing my own assessment assumptions and habits.

Take 15 minutes, and write down your first thoughts about grading and assessment (5 minutes for each question.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Reflection</th>
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<tr>
<td>describe one assessment, grading, or testing habit you do consistently, but are unhappy with.</td>
<td>write down your ideal vision for what assessment and grading should be like. If you can’t think of one, perhaps reflect on “it is in giving that one receives” and apply it to an ideal grading practice.</td>
<td>what do your responses in these two columns say about your assessment values, beliefs, contradictions, or failures?</td>
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If after serious reflection you feel that perhaps your assessment practice could use some fine-tuning, write down a list of specific things you could do differently. If you're open to a radical re-examination of your practice, depending on your personality (and grading does reflect our personalities), there are two main alternatives to the traditional methods that allow for greater transparency about grading. Both take some extra effort, but in terms of our service to students, they are probably important to consider.

1. **The Electronic Gradebook allows students to see their progress, and gives you an easy tallying system at the end of the semester.**

   There is a learning curve involved in this technology that some may find discouraging. But keep in mind that learning a new skill is one of the most powerful factors effecting personal growth because it stimulates our minds to keep going. In the case of the EGB, the hours you spend learning the technology could pay off in more ways that you’d expect.

2. **Grading contracts and student self-assessment.**

   Grading contracts are given to students at the beginning of the semester. They outline, in great detail, the professor’s expectations for attendance, participation, engagement with assignments, and guidelines for written work. They include the language: “If these requirements are not met, then I will not be able to give you a grade of B or higher.” At mid-term, students write a 2 page letter of self-assessment that goes something like this:

   *Reflect on your actions in the class so far. Read the Grading Contract and honestly reflect on your writing, behavior, participation, and engagement with the class. Also include a reflection about your writing. What have you learned about yourself as a writer? What would you like to improve? What do you need help with? Finally, give yourself a grade.* (continued on page 4)
Dr. Zhe-Sheng Chen (Pharmaceutical Sciences, chenz@stjohns.edu) presented three abstracts with students: “Marine Sponge-derived Siphonolane Triterpenes Reverse P-glycoprotein (ABCB1)-mediated Multidrug Resistance in Cancer Cells,” “RNA Interference Targeting the CD147 Induces Apoptosis of Multidrug Resistant Cancer Cells Related to XIAP Depletion,” and “Lapatinib Could Reverse ABCB1 and ABCG2 Mediated-multidrug Resistance in Vitro, ex-vivo and in Vivo but Increase Exposure of Chemotherapeutic Agent” at the 100th American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) in Denver, CO (April 2009); also co-published with students three articles: “Nilotinib (AMN107, Tasigna) Reverses Multidrug Resistance in Inhibiting the Activity of the ABCB1/Pgp and ABCG2/BCRP/MXR Transporters” in Biochemical Pharmacology; “Effect of Sunitinib on Reversal of Multidrug Resistance Induced by ATP-Binding Cassette Transporters,” in Cancer Letters, and “Revisiting Triterpenoids from the Red Sea Sponge Callyspongia siphonella” in the Journal of Natural Products (April 2009).

Dr. Michael Dempsey (Humanities, dempseym@stjohns.edu) published an article, “Providence, Distributive Justice, and Divine Government in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas: Some Implications for Ecclesial Practice,” in New Blackfriars (May 2009).

Dr. Hannah Berliner Fischthal (English, fischthh@stjohns.edu) published an article, "The Berliner/Berkenstat Connection," in AVOTAYNU: The International Review of Jewish Genealogy (Winter 2008).

Dr. Maura C. Flannery (Computer Science, Mathematics and Science, flannerm@stjohns.edu) presented a paper, “The Sewing Needle: Technology Piercing the Science/Art Divide,” at an international conference on Science, Technology, and the Humanities: A New Synthesis held at Stevens Institute of Technology in New Jersey (April 2009).

Professor Connie J. Frisch-Cherniak (Fine Arts, frischcc@stjohns.edu) showed her artwork in the following exhibits: “New Beginnings” (March-April 2009) and “Selections from the Portfolios of CPG Members” (May-June 2009) at the CPG Gallery, Staten Island, NY; and “New Works from the Members of the Creative Photography Guild” at the St. George Public Library, Staten Island, NY (May-June 2009).

Dr. Elise G. Megehee (Chemistry, megehee@stjohns.edu) presented “Cooperative Learning in Inorganic Chemistry: Group Activities for Fun & Learning” at the 40th Middle Atlantic Regional Meeting of the American Chemical Society, Queensborough Community College, Bayside, NY (May 2008).

Dr. Abu Serajuddin (Pharmaceutical Sciences, serajuda@stjohns.edu) published an article, “Development of Clinical Dosage Forms for a Poorly Water-Soluble Drug: Formulation and Characterization of a Novel Solid Microemulsion Preconcentrate System for Oral Delivery of a Poorly Water-Soluble Drug,” in the Journal of Pharmaceutical Sciences (May 2009); presented a Webinar on “Salt Selection and Optimization for New Chemical Entities” organized by the American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists (AAPS); and made a presentation on “Lipid-based Solid Dispersion for Oral Delivery” at the AAPS National Conference on Lipid-based Drug Delivery in Baltimore (March 2009).
Faculty News

If you would like to send an entry to “Faculty News,” the deadline for the September issue is August 21. 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.

(The Art of Grade-Giving continued from page 2)

Students write a similar letter at the end of the semester, looking back at their progress and giving themselves a final grade.

Ideally, professors sit down and discuss the student’s self assessment, and clarify any points of misunderstanding.

For example, a student (call him Bob) recently handed me his midterm self-assessment and declared at the end of it that he deserved an A. “Bob” is clearly not an A student – he has done the minimal amount of work, has missed 5 classes, and even his self-assessment was riddled with spelling errors. I asked him if he was surprised by his grades at the end of last semester and he said yes – he did much worse than he expected. We were able to have a good talk about why that may be the case, and I gave him very clear guidelines for what an A means in my classes. He remarked that in some classes he does minimal work and gets an A, and in other classes he works much harder and gets a C. “It’s skitzo” he said.

I think the challenge is to remove the “skitzo” factor for students by challenging ourselves to be more transparent in our grading practices. This seems especially important for freshman, who are still learning the fundamentals of time management and reaching out to their professors when they need help.

Including students in the grading process allows them to participate in the conversation that determines their GPA, their scholarship, and in many cases, their future at St John’s. While it may not mean that we “receive” anything in particular after “giving” out grades, remember that receiving is all about a gift well given – and when it comes to student engagement, no gift should be left un-opened.

PAF Workshop

The Office of the Provost, in conjunction with the Technology Learning Center (TLC) and the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), will sponsor a workshop on Preparing Personnel Action Forms (PAFs) and the May Memo. This is your opportunity to meet with representatives from the Provost’s Office and the TLC regarding the 2009-2010 PAF. Chairpersons and Personnel Committee members are encouraged to attend.

Date: Thursday, May 28
Time: 1 to 3 p.m.
Location: Library Room B3, Queens Campus
To register: Call the CTL at ext. 1859 or email us at CTL@stjohns.edu.
CTL Fellows on Research in Teaching and Learning

On April 22, the 2007-2009 CTL Fellows made presentations on their projects which deal with integrating technology into their teaching. Over the two years of their fellowship, they explored active learning strategies and technologies that you might also find useful in your teaching. Short descriptions of their projects follow:

**WeBWorK: Online Homework Delivery System**
Florin Catrina (St. John’s College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, catrina@stjohns.edu)

The main use of *WeBWorK* is to deliver online individualized homework problems. It automatically checks students’ answers, it stores the scores, and it provides useful statistics to the instructor. There is a large National Problems Library (over 10,000 problems) that can be used for undergraduate Mathematics courses. Some institutions are experimenting with more diverse uses of the system such as Online Testing (exams and quizzes) or Assessment (for placement purposes). Comprehensive information on *WeBWorK*, its use, and its development is available at: [http://webwork.maa.org/wiki/Main_Page](http://webwork.maa.org/wiki/Main_Page). The system was developed at the University of Rochester through the support of several grants from the National Science Foundation. It is available free of charge to colleges and universities anywhere in the world, as open source software. There is the possibility of having courses hosted by the University of Rochester, but having *WeBWorK* installed on our own server gives us definite advantages, from higher speed for users (hosting servers can be slow at times because of heavy use), to the opportunity to look into other uses of the system (e.g. online placement tests).

Since late 2007, *WeBWorK* has been running on a St. John’s University server. It has been (and it is currently) used in several Pre-Calculus, Calculus, Statistics, and Mathematics for Liberal Arts courses. The overall student response is clearly in favor of the system, the most appreciated feature being the instant feedback.

There are numerous people from several departments who contributed to obtaining the server, to having the system installed, and to using the software: the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science, St. John’s College Dean’s Office, the Grants Office, St. John’s Information Technology, the creators of *WeBWorK* at University of Rochester, and of course, the Center for Teaching and Learning.

**Development of Web-based Games for Biochemistry**
Sue Ford (College of Pharmacy and Allied Health Professions, fords@stjohns.edu)

Biochemistry is a course for which the students experience much anxiety. They must learn the vocabulary of biochemistry, requiring memorization of structures and pathways, and bring together the concepts of biology and chemistry. It is a daunting task for sophomores. Computer technology can help them to acquire and retain the skills and knowledge they need. The purpose of my project was to use interactive web-based computer games to facilitate student learning. Such activities are intended to: 1) *reduce students’ anxiety* about this course by providing enjoyable activities; 2) *use active learning* to enhance acquisition of concepts and knowledge, and 3) *engage the students outside of the classroom*.

Games, among other things, require animation and interactivity. I have created rudimentary animations for class using PowerPoint, but PowerPoint is unsatisfactory for interaction. The software I chose was Adobe Flash, a popular program for animation and games. I took two courses in Flash from Aquent Graphics Institute in Manhattan which covered the basics of Flash and animation. Flash is very powerful but to paraphrase B. Parker “Before great power comes great learning.” It took quite a while...
to learn enough of the quirks of shapes and motions to create an animation of a biochemical process: http://facpub.stjohns.edu/~fords/PHS2201/G-protein2009.swf

The underlying scheme to create this short animation involves drawing the components and setting up a timeline for every motion and shape as shown at: http://facpub.stjohns.edu/~fords/PHS2201/FlashWorkingStage.jpg

Now that I am able to animate with Flash, the next step will be to advance to interactivity. I will need to learn some ActionScript. To that end I have ordered several books, one of which has code for a game similar to what I want to create for metabolic pathways.

Protopedia
Marc Gillespie (College of Pharmacy and Allied Health Professions, gillespm@stjohns.edu)

I have had a long and somewhat twisted exploration of the available tools for publishing and pushing 3D molecule viewers for a teaching lab. The activities for this lab center around the manipulation of 3-dimensional models of a number of proteins. Each protein is examined for how it might bind to specific molecules or to other proteins.

The challenges of such an activity arise both at the hardware level and the cognitive level. The objective for this particular endeavor was to remove the "hardware issues" and get the students straight to thinking about how these molecules fit together to drive function and phenotypic responses.

Originally I started with the open source (though now not so much so) Pymol program that provided a very powerful platform for 3D manipulation. This approach required students to download and install the program locally on their laptops, a problem that I partially worked through by setting up a local server and having all of the files for program installation and the molecule description files run off a script that set things up on their laptops. In short, however, this was a big headache.

Since then I have moved to Protopedia. It is a wiki-based platform that has two really big advantages over a locally installed program, and one really big advantage at the educational content level. Since it is wiki-based, the 3D viewer and the descriptive text have been linked, so instructions for how to manipulate the 3D models and scripts governing the 3D models are hidden from the users, who just point and click their way through the exercise. More importantly, it is operating-system independent, so it works without installation on most Windows, Mac, and Linux systems. Finally, as a wiki it is very collaborative, so exercises can be shared, something that allowed me to incorporate more material into the lesson, and provided new ideas. Pages can be copied and locked, so that an exercise for a specific class can be held static.

As a starting point I have cited the links that I used in the lab, just to give you a flavor of how the lab went. The links (with a little intro) for the pharmacogenomics class (freshmen and sophomores) are itemized as they were in the lab. Students worked in pairs with their laptops or a laptop provided.

I. Listen to instruction and load the Protopedia page: Students were given a brief tutorial on how to use Protopedia after a discussion of how 3D modeling can be used in drug design. Though this was not part of the lab exercise you can essentially see the same material here as a video. The Protopedia Site: http://www.proteopedia.org/wiki/index.php/Main_Page

II. Hemoglobin Exercise
This part of the exercise was almost identical to the Pymol version that was used in the first year of this
course. However with Protopedia and cutting out the need for installation, we added an additional three exercises to the lab.
Hemoglobin: http://www.proteopedia.org/wiki/index.php/Hemoglobin

III. Lac Repressor Exercise
This is the "classic" model for how transcription regulation works and is probably the one that you can find in most textbooks, including the one we use in this course. This exercise is very well worked out and is an example of how other teachers using Protopedia are contributing, working collaboratively, without even knowing each other.
Lac Repressor Protein And Exercise: http://www.proteopedia.org/wiki/index.php/Lac_repressor

IV. Prion Disease
I stuck this in because we have a section on epigenetic phenomenon that we go over in class. It was very nice to get the students some hands-on time to go over this.

V. Cholinesterase Inhibitors
We also threw in a drug development example as much of the class is dedicated to understanding drug design, and eventually toxicity evaluation and prediction based on genetic markers.
Cholinesterase Inhibitors: http://www.proteopedia.org/wiki/index.php/1eve

Multimedia Project: Does it Enhance Student Writing?
Marianallet Mendez-Rivera (Institute for Core Studies, mendezm1@stjohns.edu)

As a Teaching with Technology Fellow, I spent the last two years researching ways of enhancing students’ writing through the use of technology. Based on the literature and my own experience as a professor, I believed a multimedia writing project could enhance my students’ writing experiences. First, it would allow them to use what they cannot live without—technology, and second, it could facilitate students’ learning of rhetorical principles.

The project involved students conducting research on another culture. Students needed to conduct interviews as well as use both scholarly and popular sources to complete their project. In addition, they had to incorporate two other types of media (audio files, videos, pictures, etc) into their writing. Students used Google™ Docs as a platform to complete the assignment. The main reasons for using this web-based application were 1) it is open source, and 2) it is relatively easy to use. At the end of Fall 08 semester, I collected students’ feedback regarding their e-Portfolio experience—the e-Portfolio included the project described above as well as their assessment of the learning goals for the course.

Out of 52 respondents, 19 stated that the multimedia project indeed enhanced their writing skills; 4 thought that they improved somewhat, and 22 did not think their skills improved. Unfortunately, many students did not explain the reasons for their answers, which left me wondering about the specific ways in which they thought their writing was enhanced as well as why some did not believe so. Interestingly enough, however, when asked whether they would recommend that I keep the assignment for future classes, over two-thirds of them, 33, in fact recommended I do so. In their words, the assignment allowed them to show/play with their creativity.

As of right now, I believe this multimedia project did not enhance the writing experience of most of my students. Although the assignment was more enjoyable for me to read, and in some cases even easier to understand, I think that for many students, their performance was negatively affected by the use of technology—basically they paid more attention to the assignment’s layout, design, and use of technology than to the writing itself. Even though the results of the experience are not that good, I believe that with more
practice on both ends—students and myself—the assignment may yield better results. And I look forward to it!

Law and Technology
Mary Noe (College of Professional Studies, noem@stjohns.edu)

Technology has taken the legal field by storm. The breadth of it is incalculable and like most of technology, it is a moving target. Here is a list of what I have taught, presented and learned.

The following programs, among others, were taught to my Legal Studies students in College of Professional Studies. These students now have the ability to provide technology support in law offices.

*Abacus Law* is to a law office what cleaning the basement is to a homeowner. It provides organization to the plethora of information on legal cases. The program lists actions to be taken on a case, tracks the schedules of work to be performed, enters telephone calls, case facts and advice provided to the client. It is also a management tool for the analysis of work flow, case status, and types of cases opened and closed, and permits regular utilization of automated legal court forms.

*CT Summation* is software used for litigation that allows paralegals and assistants to gain control over every piece of critical data related to a case. When cases are 3 – 6 years old it is easy to have a file with information that is disparate and fragmented; key evidence can easily slip through the cracks. Searching information about a case and setting up the chronology is built into the program. The program helps prevent problems such as violation of attorney-client privilege or conflicts of interest.

The software program *CASE MAP* allows the trial preparer to create reports, timelines, diagrams and visuals for trial exhibits. These programs are now essential at most trials in order for juries to visualize events.

Finally, the students learn about electronic discovery and how to electronically file cases in federal court.

I had two opportunities to present topics on law as it relates to technology. My first presentation was at a Continuing Legal Education program for attorneys presented by the Association of the Bar of the City of New York. My topic was Technology and Legal Ethics. One aspect of the presentation focused on metadata, the hidden information that lies behind documents that may contain privileged information regarding a client. When such a document is sent to another client or adversary the privilege may be violated. The attorney-client privilege has taken on new meaning now with Electronically Stored Information (ESI) on computers, cell phones, answering machine and text messages.

My second presentation was at the MBAA International Conference in Chicago to university professors who teach business students about the law. My presentation related to e-discovery. Electronic discovery (also called e-discovery) refers to any process in which electronic data is sought, located, secured, and searched with the intent of using it as evidence in a civil or criminal legal case. Court opinions have recently decided that businesses that destroy electronically stored information during the course of litigation may seriously compromise their cases.

My research in legal technology has consisted of studying the software used for my classes, attending technology seminars and reading the latest court opinions on e-discovery.
Thinking Structurally about Historical Data: Maps & GIS Technology
Susie J. Pak (St. John's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, paks1@stjohns.edu)

The purpose of my CTL Technology Fellow project is to develop a teaching module that helps students to think structurally about different kinds of historical data and also incorporates both archival and web-based research. The module introduces how Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology can be used to analyze contemporary census data, and also includes a practical module for student research at the New York Public Library Map Division. The goal of the project is to show how the concepts of maps, space, and networks can help students to think structurally about historical data, and also determine where it can be found and how it can be analyzed. The project offers a practical and limited introduction to GIS as well as the rationale for the incorporation of geographic-based methods of analysis at the undergraduate level. The hope is that the project will also help to remedy the more general issue that historians are usually unfamiliar with quantitative methods because of their lack of exposure at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Who is Afraid of Social Networking?
Kristin Prevallet (Institute for Core Studies, prevallk@stjohns.edu)

The CTL fellowship allowed me to make the leap from dreaming about an ideal online environment for my three Composition courses, to sitting down and actually developing one. I started out by investigating and testing different online portfolio sites such as the KEEP toolkit, designed by the Carnegie Foundation. Although it was effective in managing student work, it didn't provide an open space for peer review which is essential to our courses. Knowing that students are already attracted to blogging, I decided to set up a blogging site to facilitate peer review: http://sjucomp1000c.blogspot.com/. That worked well, although I wasn't satisfied with the manageability of the site. It looked good, but was a lot of work for me to micromanage. Finally through collaborative efforts within my department, I discovered the social networking site Ning. Ning allows students to post their pictures and maintain a blog for the course. It also presents the ideal environment for peer review, because students can comment on each other's work and it is always cross-referenced. I have found that students are writing much more productively on their Ning blogs, and are much more engaged with their ideas. This is probably because the Ning site allows for a feeling of informal spontaneity, which is important for getting students to enjoy generating ideas that can then be developed into more formal essays. Thanks to the CTL for giving me the opportunity to use technology and develop an ideal out-of-classroom learning environment.

Guiding Our Students Through This Difficult Economy
Peter P. Cardalena, Jr. (College of Professional Studies, cardalep@stjohns.edu)

I suspect the reason I am besieged for information involving the economy is because our students know that I practice law. Several stated that either one or both of their parents have lost jobs and quite a few have shared with me that bankruptcy was their families only alternative. These heavy burdens are causing stresses that clearly impact on our students education. Accordingly, I feel compelled to address these concerns in class. Therefore, I have added another dimension to my lectures. Consider the following:

Discussing the Economy: In some classes I mention the economy. Having spent seven decades on this planet, I as well as many others have witnessed both the best and the worst times. Through
Sloan-C Online Courses about Online Teaching

The Sloan Consortium on Quality Online Education (Sloan-C) is offering workshops about online teaching.

To find out more information on these Sloan-C 2009 online workshops visit: http://www.sloan-c.org/2009ws_schedule.

To enroll in a workshop, please email us at CTL@stjohns.edu and we will send you the Sloan-C College Pass code needed to enroll online.

Each it was clear that both solutions were presented and problems were resolved. I impress upon our students that every generation has had problems, and discuss some of that history. In the 1950s the air-raid sirens reinforced the possibility of a final war. Subsequent decades would give witness to racial strife, demonstrations over the Vietnam War and financial events that caused the first lay-offs of New York City Police Officers, the first time in history. Each decade and generation had its own problems culminating with the horrific events of September 11, 2001. Through it all, our nation has survived and it will continue to do so. This gives our students hope which I have been assured is greatly appreciated by them.

Having a Plan: I remind our students that there are times when the pursuit of a career goal may require a detour. A tough economy may delay a post-undergraduate degree opportunity. I urge them to have a resume prepared, encourage the use of the University Career Center, and raise the possibility of having an alternative temporary employment. In the 1990s there was glut of attorneys. Legal employment was difficult to obtain. Several students contacted me at the time seeking suggestions in what was then another tough economy. I advised one in particular that Health Care will always be timely. He obtained a certificate in that area, and was hired by a health care agency. Shortly thereafter, they offered him the position of attorney and today he runs the company. A slight delay in his career pursuit proved to be very lucrative. I also inform students of the opportunities in Civil Service Employment. All municipalities require lawyers, paralegals and other professionals, so why not open the door to Federal, State or local government employment. It is well-known that in a difficult economy civil service employment is a good safety net. It also offers many graduate level educational opportunities.

Find a Mentor: I encourage our students to find a mentor. Our University offers students golden opportunities in that area. The Learning Communities here at St. John’s offer students mentors in every discipline. Professors are always ready willing and able to offer advice. I emphasize how a person who happens to have the same career that a student is seeking, can provide invaluable information.

Join an Organization: Our University has a wealth of organizations that are worthwhile. I encourage the students to find one that coincides with their career aspirations. Since the members of each group share the same goals they enhance educational growth. Often guest speakers will share information that could probably not be obtained otherwise. There is always the possibility that a club or organization will have inside information on matters of concern, including employment opportunities, scholarships or internships. After graduation, colleagues in these groups will continue to be helpful in the net-working which is the natural by-product of any group.

Being Positive: I have stressed before that I refuse to be negative in my approach to not only students but to life itself. To further that end, I remind our students that these problems with the economy will end. I also know that guiding them through this difficult time will allow them to focus more on their educational pursuits.