



The Instructional Development Unit

... advancing teaching and learning

The Mona Teacher

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UWI Students Multitasking



Can Our Students Really Multi-Task?

Inside this Issue

Page	
1	Can our Students Really Multi-Task?
2	The Annual Combined Meeting of the IDUs
3	UWI/Guardian Life Premium Teaching Award 2012
4	The IDU in its 20 th Year
4	Teaching Skills Workshop 2012- Promoting Engagement in the UWI Classroom
7	Update on the Certificate in University Teaching and Learning
7	Whither the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Initiative?
7	Communique
9	Teaching as ethical activity.
10	Active Learning Quiz

From time to time we hear the claim from students that they can multi-task. We see people driving and using cell phones, chatting and texting, students studying and listening to background music, working on a project and engaging in multiple conversations using instant messaging, contacting friends on Facebook, surfing the web and we wonder about this at times. Are they setting themselves up for a fall? Can we really do two things well at the same time?



**"The brain naturally focuses on concepts sequentially, one at a time"
UWI Students Multitasking**



**To multitask or not?
That is the question
UWI Students Multitasking**

The term multitasking originated from multi core computers. These computers have the ability to perform, multiple tasks simultaneously. By multitasking, our students and people in general, mean that they have the ability to use various technologies at the same time and concentrate on all of them. From the anecdotal evidence available, our students are particularly fond of saying that they can multitask while still engaging in our classes or studying.

It appears that recent scientific findings do not support some of the claims being made about and for multitasking. Dr. John Medina, well respected molecular biologist is on record as saying "Multitasking, when it comes to paying attention, is a myth. The brain naturally focuses on concepts sequentially, one at a time" (p.72). This amounts to dismissing claims about multitasking and in fact indicating that it is a myth.

There are also other recent research studies investigating multitasking and these are helping us to understand what is really going on. It appears that students are engaged in activities such as task-shifting, and further it is being reported that those behaviours actually lessen their ability to do any of those individual tasks very well.

Continued on page 5

Happenings at the IDU

The Annual Combined Meeting of the IDUs



Opening session of the combined meeting of the IDUs. Seen here is Prof. E. Nigel Harris, Vice Chancellor (left) addressing the meeting. Others in the photo (r-l) are Prof. Alvin Wint, Pro Vice Chancellor, Board of Undergraduate Studies; Mrs. Patricia Atherley, Head, Learning Resource Centre UWI, Cave Hill; Dr. Silvia Henry, Head IDU UWI, Cave Hill; Dr. Mervin Chisholm Manager/Coordinator IDU, UWI, Mona Campus; Dr. Anna May Edwards-Henry, Director IDU, UWI, St. Augustine Campus; Ms. Metz Peterkin Administrative Assistant IDU, UWI, Mona.

The annual meeting of the combined Instructional Development Units (IDU) of the University of the West Indies was held January 12-13, 2012 at the IDU, Mona. The heads of the IDU from the Cave Hill and St. Augustine campuses journeyed to the Mona Campus for the meeting.

The meeting provided an opportunity for the IDUs to report on, and review their programmes, plan meaningfully for the ensuing year and encourage and support the efforts of each campus to advance teaching and learning throughout the university. In this regard, reports from all three land campuses were tabled at the meeting. There were also addresses and interaction with the Vice Chancellor, Professor Nigel Harris, Pro Vice Chancellor for the Board of Undergraduate Studies, Professor Alvin Wint and Pro Vice Chancellor for Graduate Studies, Professor Ronald Young.

A special feature of the meeting was the opportunity to focus on the teaching of students with special needs. The meeting was addressed by the Head of the Counseling Unit at the Mona Campus, Dr. Angella Gordon Stair. In her address she provided tips on how the IDUs can facilitate more faculty focus on students with special needs in the UWI classroom.

These were very important meetings because for some time now the IDU has been thinking about changing its name to make it reflect the priorities of the unit on each campus. The major priority is to facilitate the pedagogical development of UWI faculty to teach in student-centred ways. Unfortunately, the connotation of the words “instructional development” in the IDU’s name suggests that its emphasis

is on developing instructional skills. This is often interpreted in ways that suggest that the unit has interests in traditional, didactic approaches to teaching and learning. It is an injustice for the IDU to be perceived as a unit that is primarily interested in the development of instructional skills when it is striving to promote learner-centred teaching, to facilitate effective learning and the attainment of excellence in teaching and learning.



Dr. Anna May Edwards-Henry, Director IDU, St. Augustine Campus

The heads of the three IDUs therefore agree to recommend to the relevant UWI authorities that the name of the IDU be changed from **Instructional Development Unit** to **Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL/ C^ETL)**. The major decisions of the IDU meeting were conveyed to the Campuses by way of a communiqué.

The text of this communiqué can be seen in this newsletter on page 7



News you can use



UWI/Guardian Life Premium Teaching Award



2004 Awardee
Dr. Willard Pinnock

It is that time of the year when the IDU prepares for the biennial UWI/Guardian Life Premium Teaching Award, scheduled for October 11, 2012 at the Gold Room at the Mona Visitors' Lodge and Conference Centre.

This awards ceremony will commence at 6:00 pm.



2006 Awardee
Dr. Tomlin Paul

The UWI/Guardian Life Premium Teaching Award is an award for excellence in university teaching. It is awarded to an outstanding faculty member or outstanding faculty members at the UWI, Mona campus.

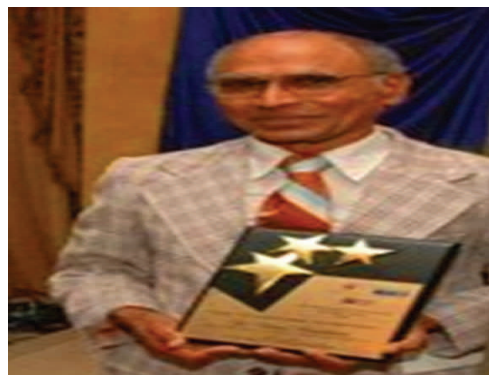
This is a highly prestigious award and it seeks to elevate the place of teaching at the UWI, Mona Campus. It is jointly sponsored by the UWI, Mona Campus and the Guardian Life Limited (Jamaica) and Guardian Holdings Group Limited (Trinidad). Since it is a biennial award, it alternates with a Premium Teaching Lecture.



2008 Awardee
Dr. Michelle Hamilton

All interested faculty members are invited to apply for this prestigious award. However, each applicant must participate in a teaching portfolio development workshop to fine tune skills in the development and compilation of a

teaching portfolio. Each applicant will submit an application form and then a portfolio which is reviewed by the IDU. The finalists are then named by the IDU team and hereafter they are referred to as nominees.



2008 Awardee
Dr. Michael Ponnambalam

These portfolios are then sent to an international panel of judges usually in Canada and the USA. The criteria for assessing the portfolios is established by the

IDU and also sent to the panel of judges for them to do the adjudication.



2010 Awardee
Dr. Aldrie Henry-Lee

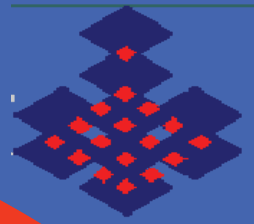
The chair of the panel of judges is referred to as the chief judge and usually serves as keynote speaker at the Awards function. In 2010, the last time the award was given, Dr. Aldrie Henry Lee of the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute for Social and Economic Studies (SALISES), Faculty of Social Sciences was

the awardee.



News you can use

The IDU in its 20th Year



Dr. Beryl Allen
(Former Head of the IDU and also the founding Coordinator)

Ms. Meta Bogle
(Consultant to the IDU and one of the first workshop facilitators)



Dr. Mervin Chisholm
(Current head of the IDU)

The IDU will celebrate 20 years of service to the Mona Campus in September 2012. It was in 1992 that the IDU was established to serve the needs of the campus for pedagogical support and the training of our lecturers to teach in more student-centred ways. This milestone will be marked with several activities and you will be invited to participate and share in the celebrations.

Teaching Skills Workshop 2012- Promoting Engagement in the UWI Classroom

Teaching Skills Workshop (TSW) 2012 was held January 17-19, 2012 at the IDU Training Room on the Mona Campus. It brought together 28 faculty members as workshop participants and nine faculty members serving as facilitators from the five Faculties on campus. Participants were challenged to think in creative ways about teaching and learning in higher education and to hone their pedagogical skills to prepare our millennial learners. Teachers never stop learning and these faculty members who participated were driven by intellectual curiosity and a deep-seated



Participants of the recently concluded Teaching Skills Workshop 2012

passion for learning. Obviously, they have a commitment to life-long learning and this was clearly demonstrated in their presence and participation in the three day workshop.

Continued on page 6



Can Our Students Really Mutli-Task ?

Cont.....

Bowman, Levine, Waite, and Gendron (2010) in their research investigated multitasking of students on electronic media while they were doing their schoolwork. They examined how students used instant messaging (IM), a form of media used when persons multitask for instance, college students doing homework and multitasking. They predicted that students who multitasked while doing academic activities, for instance reading an assigned paper, would take longer to read it and would not comprehend

the paper with the levels of clarity that others who were not multitasking would have, in fact they predicted that they would perform poorly on a comprehension test of the assigned reading.

In carrying out their research, the researchers also randomly assigned participants to three groups, those who IM before reading, the second group, those who IM during the reading of the assigned passage and the third group was made up of students who read the assigned passage without any IM. The findings indicated that the students took significantly longer times to read the passages when they were IMING during the reading than in the other named conditions. Of interest was the fact that test performance did not seem to have been affected in any adverse way by IMING. There is evidence then that suggest that IMING when doing academic tasks like reading an assignment can cause some problems and the learner will need more time to complete the task.

The thumbs up given to multitasking in everyday engagements on the university campus and elsewhere in the society might be misleading when measured against the findings of scientific research. It is very difficult to concentrate effectively when one is doing two or more things at the same time. Those who have accepted the conventional wisdom on multitasking might need to rethink this belief and hopefully they will be persuaded to cease the practice.

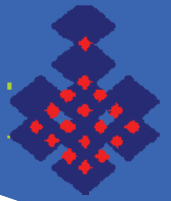


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Teaching Skills Workshop 2012- Promoting Engagement in the UWI Classroom

Cont.....



Facilitators from the Jamaica Language Unit prepare to conduct the session on Writing Across the Curriculum



Dr. Mairette Newman of Teacher Education and Qualitative Research, School of Education

The workshop was particularly interested in developing the skills of UWI lecturers to engage our students far more in learning activities in the classroom. It is now known that passive learning that oftentimes occurs through lectures is the least effective approach to learning. Hence, the IDU is at the forefront of the promotion of active learning at UWI, especially the kind of active teaching and learning that promotes engagement. Therefore, teaching is not just about an interactive lecture with questions and answers. The IDU seeks to develop the skills of faculty in creating learning activities that will keep students, even in large classes engaged and the TSW is one of the avenues that allows the IDU to move the faculty along this trajectory of teaching for engagement.

This year the IDU joined forces with the English Language Unit of the Department of Language, Linguistics and Philosophy to introduce a Writing Across the Curriculum component in the workshop. Arising from this partnership, the IDU and the English Language Unit will continue to facilitate Writing Across the Curriculum workshops during this semester and next academic year.

This TSW was made possible with the help of academic staff members who joined forces with the IDU. The IDU conveys sincere gratitude for their service. They are as follows:

Dr Mairette Newman, Lecturer, Teacher Education and Qualitative Research in Education, School of Education

Dr Beryl Allen, Retired Manager/ Coordinator of the IDU

Mrs. Michelle McKoy- Stewart, Part time Lecturer, School of Education

Dr. Michael Ponnambalam, Senior Lecturer, Physics Department, Faculty of Pure and Applied Sciences

Dr. Delroy Chevers, Lecturer, Management Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences

Dr. Ingrid McLaren Lecturer, Use of English, Faculty of Humanities and Education

Mrs. Carolyn Dyché, Lecturer, Use of English, Faculty of Humanities and Education

Mrs. Alison Altidor-Brooks, Lecturer, Use of English, Faculty of Humanities and Education

Mrs. Vivienne Harding, Lecturer, Use of English, Faculty of Humanities and Education



Participants actively engage in discussion at the recently concluded Teaching Skills Workshop 2012

Happenings at the IDU

Update on the Certificate in University Teaching and Learning



The third cohort of the Certificate in University Teaching and Learning complete their penultimate module

The IDU continues to offer the post graduate Certificate in University Teaching and Learning (CUTL). The fourth cohort of students commenced the programme in August 2011 and they are now completing the second module. The third cohort is now completing the final module: Reflective Teaching for Learning and this includes the practicum. These students are expected to graduate in November 2012.



Certificate in University Teaching and Learning— Cohort three caught in a reflective moment

Whither the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Initiative?



In October 2010, the IDU launched the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Initiative. Since that time the unit has invited lecturers to become involved in this ambitious project to get faculty researching their teaching and of course publishing their findings. An

OurVLE learning community was established, seminars and workshops held and of course collegial support given to lecturers who requested the same. It is anticipated that in due course, we will be able to invite the campus to look at the pedagogical research of our colleagues.

Instructional Development Units (Cave Hill, Mona, St. Augustine) *Communiqué*

The annual meeting of heads of the Instructional Development Units (Cave Hill Mona and St. Augustine) was held on January 12th and 13th, 2012, with consensus attained on the following issues.

1. Change of Name of the Instructional Development Unit

The name “Instructional Development Unit” no longer adequately reflects the priorities and the breadth of focus of the unit since “instructional development” suggests that its emphasis is on developing instructional skills. Following on the seminal works of Barr & Tagg (1995), education institutions have shifted their conception of, approach to and practice of education from a focus on instruction to a focus on learning. The Board for Undergraduate Studies and all the Campus IDUs have called for the name of the IDU to be changed to reflect this paradigm shift. Accordingly, the meeting agreed and the proposed new name for the IDU is *Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning*.

It was also agreed that professional educators in the ‘Centre’ should be termed *Faculty Development Specialists*.

Continued on page 8.....

Instructional Development Units (Cave Hill, Mona, St. Augustine) Communiqué

Cont....

2. Sensitization to Students' Special Needs

In response to a request from the Deputy Principal of the Cave Hill Campus the meeting addressed the need for sensitization of faculty to students at the UWI with special needs. The meeting acknowledged the presence among the student body of students with special needs namely - physical challenges (disabilities), learning disorders and emotional challenges. Physical challenges, such as blindness, are easily recognizable, but hidden disabilities (these include reading and mathematics disorders, anxiety disorders, depression and attention deficit disorders) are more difficult to detect. The meeting agreed that without adequate interventions and accommodations, these disorders can significantly hinder the academic progress of students. Accordingly, it was decided that:

- i. the counseling services of the UWI be included in the IDU's training sessions, especially during the Orientation Workshops for new Faculty, so that academic staff can be sensitized to the challenges faced by special needs students.
- ii faculty be encouraged to embrace their roles as sentinels of their classes and make referrals to the counseling services where such special needs are seen or suspected.
- iii IDUs would incorporate or expand the inclusion of issues surrounding teaching and learning approaches that take account of student variability within relevant modules of the Certificate in University teaching and Learning (CUTL) programme.

3. Agreement to Work More Closely with Graduate Studies and Support Graduate Studies and Research Information Portal (GRIP)

Arising from a meeting with Professor Ronald Young, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Graduate Studies, the meeting agreed that the IDU would work more closely with the Office of Graduate Studies particularly in the training of graduate supervisors and development of appropriate intervention strategies to meet some of the needs of the university's graduate students. The IDU will also promote use of the Graduate Studies and Research Information Portal (GRIP). The portal is designed to overcome the isolation felt by graduate students and to build cohesiveness among the students across the campuses.

4. Academic Advising

Academic advising is recognised as a teaching function and in the past it was an area in which the IDUs at Mona and St. Augustine had provided leadership and guidance. It was resolved that the IDUs should commit to re-engage with this important area where this was not being done and improve on any programmes that were already in place.

5. Blended Approach to CUTL

The IDUs agreed to revise the UWI Postgraduate Certificate in University Teaching and Learning (CUTL) to incorporate a blended approach to delivery. Many members of faculty have expressed an interest in a blended format for the delivery of the CUTL as this would reduce the number of face-to-face sessions that they are required to attend and usually find difficult to work into tight schedules. The blended programme should aim to reduce face-to-face-sessions by half the original number.

Professional Development at the IDU



Each Semester the IDU offers multiple opportunities for the pedagogical advancement of the UWI faculty.

In the picture above Dr. Michael Ponnambalam a UWI master teacher assisted in facilitating a professional development opportunity in the form of a workshop "Putting fire in your teaching."

Focus on Teaching

Teaching as an ethical activity

Part One

Introduction

Traditionally many teachers at all levels of the educational system profess love for teaching as a profession, or for some, a major calling of their lives and hence a vocation. Teaching was never subjected to some of the occupational norms associated with some other professions, for instance an ethical code. But this has changed in many places and is changing in others. Gone are the days when classroom privacy and lack of accountability were seen as important occupational norms in teaching. Then the teacher, could close the classroom door and teach without much accountability. Learners hardly ever challenged their teacher's actions or decisions. However, this is no longer the situation and the teacher's actions and decisions are now scrutinized by students and the public at large. The need for ethical practice is certainly a contemporary reality.

Usually a university teacher who is committed to the teaching function of the professoriate will embrace a philosophy of teaching and learning. This philosophy will guide professional practice. Carr (1990) is of the view that there are approaches to teaching which position the teacher as "a professional educator whose deliberations about what to teach and how to teach it are again informed by philosophical beliefs and ethical concerns" (p.105). This notion of teaching as an "ethical activity" is important. It should not be dismissed at the university, neither should it be marginalized. We now look at the meaning of teaching as ethical activity and the practical outworking of embracing such a stance.

Is teaching an ethical activity?

Hostetler (1997) embraces this notion of teaching as an ethical activity as well, but draws attention to what it is not:

Ethics need not, and probably should not always be at the forefront of teachers' minds. But it persists as the background project, as teachers are continually searching for, and being responsive to, what is ethically right and good. It is in this sense that teaching is fundamentally an ethical activity, not a technical one (pp.195-196).

Whilst the notion of teaching as an ethical activity can

be readily and perhaps easily embraced, the thought that it is not a technical activity flies in the face of the scientific approaches to teaching being advocated through best practice research (for instance, Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001, Zelman, Daniels & Hyde, 1998.). The professional educator must engage in this deliberative enterprise about what to teach and how to teach. Then, determine the most appropriate way to teach, that is ethical decision making even as the university teacher deliberates about fairness, intellectual honesty and the pursuit of the truth. Determining how to teach, the strategies or techniques to be employed might very well be a technical issue.

Ethical decision making in teaching

There are concerns about how university teachers navigate the waters of ethical decision making, especially as more and more ethical dilemmas are confronted. In this regard, ethical codes offer much needed assistance. Guidance is also offered from the experiences gained through one's professional practice and of course that of others.

There is need for more dialogical engagements on ethical issues that confront the professoriate in their dealings with their students. Soltis (1986) acknowledges that ethical codes provide a foundation for ethical decision making and that it is important for teachers to know these codes. Increased awareness of the ethical dimensions and responsibilities of teaching is essential for both enhanced professionalism and, more significantly improved practice. A code of ethics might contribute meaningfully to greater awareness of some of the ethical issues involved in teaching in the university and to a deeper examination to determine the appropriate professional response. So, university teachers should become conversant with the ethical codes of their institutions and the professional bodies to which they belong. These groups should provide greater opportunities for conversations about ethical issues in professional practice, particularly issues dealing with responsibilities to students.

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Hostetler, K. D. (1997). *Ethical judgment in teaching*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
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To be continued in the next edition

Fun Stuff



True/False

Directions: Read the following statements. If you think that statement is true, mark it with a “T.” If you think the answer is false, mark it with an “F.”

1. Active learning strategies require more involvement from the lecturer and less involvement from the students. _____
2. Many adult students have external pressures that require them to withdraw from classes. _____
3. Active learning is based on the premise that adults learn best when they are actively involved in the learning process. _____
4. One benefit of active learning is that it helps improve student retention and motivation. _____
5. Another benefit of active learning is that students create their own curriculum. _____

Please see next issue for answers



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We also invite you to visit our
website at

[http://myspot.mona.uwi.edu/](http://myspot.mona.uwi.edu/idu/)