DIRECTOR’S WELCOME
by Josh Eyler, CTE Director & Adjunct Associate Professor of Humanities

This semester has been our busiest to date! In addition to our successful Symposium on Teaching and Learning in January (for more, see below), we hosted a very popular reading group for faculty, graduate students, and staff; we facilitated a series of new workshops, including one for faculty that focused on course design; and we continued to expand our consultation and observation services for those who are teaching at Rice.

In preparation for the CTE’s annual Advisory Board meeting held on April 13th, we collected data on our Center’s usage. I am pleased to report that 641 members of the Rice community (primarily faculty and graduate students) have walked through our doors 981 times for an event, consultation, or other program. This represents significant growth from last year, and we project further increase in demand for next year and beyond.

All of us in the CTE wish you the best of luck as the semester comes to an end. As always, please do not hesitate to email me at jeyler@rice.edu with any questions or comments.

CELEBRATE TEACHING AT RICE
2016 TEACHING AWARD CEREMONY

The entire campus community is invited to join President Leebron and Provost Miranda on Tuesday, April 26th, 2016 from 3:00-5:00 pm in Herring Hall 100 for Rice’s annual Teaching Award Ceremony & Reception. We encourage you to come and celebrate the contributions of Rice instructors who have devoted themselves to both their students and the craft of teaching. No RSVP required. A wine and appetizer reception will follow in Herring Hall 129.

View more details about this year's ceremony

NEWS IN BRIEF

ACCREDITED GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN TEACHING & LEARNING

59 graduate students and 3 postdocs across 21 departments have taken at least one of the four courses in our certificate program (UNIV 500, 501, 502, and 599), and 15 students from our first cohort will have completed the Certificate by the end of this semester. Both UNIV 500: Principles of Effective College Teaching and UNIV 502: Practicum in College Teaching will run again in the fall, and we look forward to working with this new group of students.

Read more about the Certificate program

RICE’S NEW PARTNERSHIP

Rice was recently asked to join the Center for the Integration of Research, Teaching, and Learning (CIRTL). Housed at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, CIRTL is a prestigious consortium of 46 universities devoted to preparing future STEM faculty. We are excited to be a part of this new venture, and look forward to continuing our work with STEM graduate students to help them prepare for their roles as educators. Programing at Rice will be a joint venture between Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, the Center for Teaching Excellence, and related schools and departments.

Read about CIRTL in Rice News
SEMESTER REFLECTIONS
The Power of Flexible Space: Teaching in the CTE’s Experimental Classroom

by Adrienne Simoes Correa, Lecturer in BioSciences

I highly recommend the CTE’s experimental classroom, Herring 129, for courses that vary day to day in pedagogical approach. This past semester, Herring 129 supported active learning strategies in my course, Coral Reef Ecosystems (EBIO 372), more than any space I have taught in previously, including other SCAL@R classrooms on campus. Relative to traditional classrooms with fixed seating, SCAL@R classrooms facilitate group work, yet these spaces can be difficult to rearrange if furniture is bulky and heavy or floor space is limited.

In contrast, the Herring 129 tables, chairs, and numerous whiteboards are lightweight and highly mobile, and allowed me to quickly transform the classroom space without breaking a (significant) sweat. Even better, the tabletops fold vertically, minimizing the space they occupied when I pushed them to the edge of the classroom to set up a project. I also valued the ample storage and floor space available in Herring 129. Closet storage was secure yet readily accessible (thank you, Betsy Barre!) and accommodated my nine 7x11 foot images of coral reefs, a variety of measuring tools including tapes and 1 m² PVC squares, identification guides, and clipboards.

Storing these tools at Herring facilitated their frequent use, which included covering the floor with life-size coral reef images and collecting data from them as scientists do from reefs in the field. This allowed students to connect and reinforce fundamental approaches and concepts from classroom exercises to methods and findings in published research articles over the course of the semester. Other details, such as the provision of numerous working dry erase markers and a VGA connector cable for the projector, also helped my class run smoothly in Herring.

Many thanks to the CTE for maintaining and supporting Herring 129 - we should create more classroom spaces like this across Rice’s campus!

HOW DO WE LEARN & WHY DOES IT MATTER?

As is now CTE tradition, our spring programming began on January 17th with our third annual Symposium on Teaching and Learning. Like previous years, the event included a keynote from an outside pedagogy expert (UNC’s Todd Zakrajsek, author of The New Science of Learning) as well as small group conversations over lunch. As an added treat this year, CTE Faculty Fellow Margaret Beier opened the symposium with a presentation of her recent work on teaching and learning in undergraduate classrooms at Rice.
During the month of March, Josh Eyler, the Director of the CTE, gave a presentation on the current research linking curiosity and learning. His review suggests that we need to emphasize inquiry as a principle of course design and cultivate curiosity in our students through conducting artful, intentional discussion in the classroom.

On April 6th, Robin Paige, Assistant Director of the CTE, gave a talk detailing the current research on stereotype threat. She discussed what the research tells us about how and why stereotypes affect individuals as well as how we can address it in our classrooms. Negative stereotypes impose an intellectual burden on many minorities, yet the research shows that it is also one of the factors that can be easily addressed.

On February 3rd, Elaine Howard Ecklund, the Herbert S. Autrey Chair in Social Sciences and Professor of Sociology, led an informal faculty discussion on striking a balance between the demands of research and the demands of teaching. Dr. Ecklund reminded us that the skills required to be an excellent at both teaching and research are not mutually exclusive.

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SPRING 2016 READING GROUP

Following the success of last year’s reading group, the CTE once again brought together faculty, graduate students, and staff to discuss a common text about teaching. This year, at the request of many on campus, we selected one of the most controversial books on higher education of the last decade: William Deresiewicz’s *Excellent Sheep: The Miseducation of the American Elite and the Way to a Meaningful Life*. After announcing our selection, we received an unprecedented response. 128 members of our community expressed interest (nearly six times the previous year’s numbers) and an average of 75 participated in each of the six discussions throughout the semester.

Over the six weeks we discussed pre-collegiate achievement culture, elite admissions, extra-curricular creep, leadership initiatives, advising, career counseling, curricular structures, teaching, and the ways we have conceptualized the ultimate purposes of higher education. We ended by proposing a series of concrete steps we might take to improve the education our students receive at Rice and hope to present a formal version of our suggestions to the administration in the fall.

SPRING 2016 LUNCHTIME SERIES

TEACHING MATTERS & WHAT’S NEW IN RESEARCH ON TEACHING AND LEARNING?

Every month the CTE hosts one lunchtime event for those interested in current topics on teaching and learning. These events provide the opportunity for faculty to gather with colleagues across the campus for a discussions about specific questions addressed in the scholarship of teaching and learning and effective teaching practices guided by research and experience.

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TEACHING TIP

Integrating your current research makes your teaching more efficient and more effective.

TEACHING TIP

Cultivate curiosity by teaching students to ask the right questions.

TEACHING TIP

To reduce stereotype threat in your classroom, combine high standards and specific feedback with expressed confidence that all can achieve.

HAVE YOU SEEN THE CTE BLOG THIS SPRING?

18,852 TOTAL VIEWS (JULY 2015 - APRIL 2016)

READ AND COMMENT ON OUR BLOG

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