The CTE Turns 5!

In September, the Center for Teaching Excellence will reach its fifth anniversary. At our annual advisory board meeting on April 5th, we had the opportunity to share some information about the impact of our work over the last five years. Since 2012, we have:

- Worked with 1570 unique individuals, including 235 TT faculty, 174 NTT faculty, and 18 staff instructors (for a total of 427, roughly 50% of all the instructional faculty at Rice).
- Taught 92 Ph.D. students across 25 departments in our Graduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning program, and worked with more than 500 other graduate students through events like our annual TA training.
- Facilitated 452 pedagogical consultations, classroom observations, and/or student feedback sessions.
- Developed a blog that has amassed over 52,000 total views and a website that has hit 119,000 total views.
- Hosted dozens of well-attended workshops on a range of topics dealing with evidence-based teaching practices.

Thanks, as always, for all of your support, and we’re looking forward to the next five years!

Spring 2017 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, we selected Carol Dweck’s Mindset: The New Psychology of Success.
Treybig Colloquy and Lecture

Thanks to the generous support of Jimmy and Drew Treybig, the CTE ran the first annual Treybig Teaching & Innovation Colloquy in 2017. Eight faculty (Zach Ball, CHEM; Andrea Ballestero, ANTH; Beth Beason-Abmayr, BIOS; Dan Cohan, CEVE; Ozge Gurcanli, PSYC; Janet Moore, Jones School; Scott Solomon, BIOS; Matthew Wettergreen, OEDK) were selected via a competitive application process, and each was awarded a stipend to participate in a semester-long pedagogy workshop focused on the theme of “Improving Conceptual Understanding.” The participants were asked to:

1. Meet several times over the course of the spring semester.
2. Read articles from the field of teaching and learning prior to each meeting.
3. Design a pedagogical tool (e.g., an assignment, an assessment of prior knowledge, a concept inventory, etc.) and implement this tool in courses taught the following academic year.
4. Share knowledge gained in the colloquy with departmental colleagues by the end of the academic year.

As part of this program, we were also fortunate to bring in Michelle Smith from the University of Maine to give the Treybig Lecture. Michelle gave her talk on students’ conceptual understanding to a packed house, and we are grateful to her for sharing her research with us.

Spring Teaching & Learning Institutes:

On February 9th, the CTE organized a hands-on course design workshop for instructors at our annual Spring Faculty Institute. During this 2-hour workshop faculty had the opportunity to apply research-based teaching and learning principles to designing a new course or elements of their existing courses. Topics covered included conceptualizing a course meta-question; drafting/revising learning goals; and (re)designing assignments, activities, and assessments.

On February 10th, the CTE hosted our annual Academic Job Market Institute for Graduate Students and Postdoctoral Scholars. In this 2-hour interactive workshop, we discussed how to find and interpret job advertisements how to create materials that best convey one’s research and teaching abilities and interests, how best to anticipate and respond to questions in the interview process, and how to demonstrate one’s teaching abilities in an on-campus setting.

Read more
Spring 2017 Series: What's New in Research on Teaching and Learning

Over the spring semester the CTE hosted four formal research presentations providing the opportunity for faculty, postdoctoral scholars, and graduate students to gather with colleagues across the campus for discussions about specific questions addressed in the scholarship of teaching and learning.

On January 24th, a panel of experienced Rice scholars gathered for a talk titled “Getting Started with the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.” Margaret Beier from Psychology, John Hutchinson from Chemistry, and Stephen Wang from Mathematics shared their experiences conducting, analyzing, and publishing research on teaching.

On February 21st, CHBE Postdoctoral Scholar and past student in the CTE’s Certificate in Teaching and Learning, Dan Marincel, discussed the literature on undergraduate research in the talk “Teaching Undergraduate Students Through Research Experiences.” Dan’s talk highlighted the research skills that are most important to teach and the most effective strategies for integrating undergraduate students into research.

On March 28th, Betsy Barre, Associate Director of the CTE, summarized the research on student workload and presented the Course Workload Estimator she developed with Justin Esarey from Political Science. In her talk, “How Much Should We Assign? What the Research Can (and Can’t) Tell Us,” Betsy outlined how best to estimate the amount of work we expect our students to do and how to incorporate this information into the design of our courses.

On April 18th, Robin Paige, Associate Director of the CTE, presented the research on cognition, bias, and learning that explores why developing constructive and meaningful dialogue in the classroom is central to creating deeper learning, and why this type of learning can be so difficult to facilitate. In this talk, titled “Challenging the Biased Brain: Creating Constructive Dialogue in the Classroom,” she concluded with a summary of the most effective teaching strategies that enable students to challenge their misconceptions in meaningful ways that open them up to new ideas, understanding, and beliefs.