

news

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Involvement in Learning: Four Years Later, Its Message Still Stands

by Kenneth P. Mortimer



Kenneth Mortimer is President of Western Washington University. He chaired the National Institute of Education Study Group on the Conditions of Excellence, which resulted in the report, *Involvement in Learning: Realizing the Potential of Higher Education*.

From October, 1983 to 1985 I served as chair of the Study Group on the Conditions of Excellence in American Higher Education. Since several reports had been issued on the quality of education in the elementary and secondary levels, we were asked to analyze the archives of the *Nation at Risk*, assess their implications for postsecondary education, and develop recommendations about how the federal government could develop policy recommendations to improve the quality of undergraduate education.

We were not appointed as a study group to represent anyone. We were all scholars of higher education; we had all contributed significantly to the literature on higher education; and we were all appointed for what we **know** rather than for **who** we represent. And so the report, *Involvement in Learning*, is written by insiders about the enterprise to which we devote our lives.

Involvement in Learning starts by telling how well higher education has responded to a remarkable period of growth and change that has occurred since 1945. Now in the 1980's and beyond we have the opportunity, and indeed the obligation, to concentrate on qualitative rather than quantitative growth. And we in the profession are excited that the debate about excellence in the corporate world (e.g. Peters & Waterman, *In Search of Excellence*, 1982), has extended to the public schools and now extends to institutions of higher education.

I came to agree with a number of my colleagues on the Study Group that any debate about the quality of higher education should start with a reaffirmation of the importance of higher education to society and a reiteration of shared values. While I am not going to repeat them here, they include such values as access to higher education, equity within it, and a commitment to a pluralistic higher education environment in the nation.

Participating Institutions: Antioch University, Bellevue Community College, Central Washington University, Centralia College, Clark College, Eastern Washington University, Edmonds Community College, Everett Community College, Gonzaga University, Grays Harbor College, Green River Community College, Highline Community College, Lower Columbia College, North Seattle Community College, Olympic College, Pacific Lutheran University, Pierce College, Saint Martin's College, Seattle Central Community College, Seattle Pacific University, Seattle University, Shoreline Community College, Skagit Valley College, South Puget Sound Community College, South Seattle Community College, Spokane Community College, Spokane Falls Community College, Tacoma Community College, The Evergreen State College, University of Puget Sound, University of Washington, Walla Walla Community College, Washington State University, Wenatchee Valley College, Western Washington University, Whatcom Community College, Yakima Valley Community College.

It is important to state such values because there seems to be a tendency to talk about the fundamental tension between access and quality as though it were a tradeoff. If you have one you cannot have the other. Clearly, the access/equity argument needs further discussion. We took the view that both must be improved. We need to find ways to talk about the two concepts so they are in harmony rather than conflict.

Guided by our values and goals we made recommendations for what we believed would improve the quality of undergraduate education in order to enhance learning and personal development for the greatest number of students of all ages.

Our concern is that after a period of remarkably successful adaptations to growth and change, there are signs of erosion in quality. Some warning signals that we reported (and I list only a few of them here) are:

- The test scores of college graduates applying to graduate and professional schools have declined--some by substantial amounts;
- More students are pursuing degrees in increasingly narrow fields, avoiding the liberal arts and sciences, avoiding subjects that challenge their verbal skills, and moving more and more into professional and vocational programs at the undergraduate level;
- The quality of the physical plant and equipment of our institutions have declined; and
- Faculty salaries have not kept pace with inflation.

Two things concerned us as a study group and explain some of the erosion we reported. The first is the tendency of our colleges to measure quality in terms of resources or inputs and not in terms of what students actually learn in their college years. We have argued in our report that all institutions of higher education should pay much greater attention to the learning of the students they **graduate** as true measures of effectiveness.

The second is the tendency of colleges to be unaware of the findings of research concerning what constitutes effective teaching and learning at the undergraduate level. We offered an analysis and recommendations that were grounded in the finding of this research and point the way for institutions to make improvements using the findings.

Twenty of the 27 recommendations in *Involvement in Learning* are loosely grounded on three key principles which, if implemented, would improve the quality of undergraduate education. These tend to concentrate more on the process of education than its content. Almost every policy and practice on campus, from budgets to bulletin boards, can have an impact on enhancing student learning provided that they:

- Encourage increased student involvement in academic learning,
- Insure that both students and institutions share high expectations for what can be accomplished and clear standards for college-level academic work, and
- Include provisions for assessment, with information fed back to all participants in order to improve their performance.

The report spends some time discussing these three key ideas. The first key term is involvement, referring not merely to the time but also the energy and the quality of efforts students invest in academic learning. Students learn more and better by being active participants, not passive spectators. If the policies and practices of colleges increase involvement, students will learn more.

The second key terms are standards and expectations. In order for degrees awarded by colleges to be meaningful, students must be involved in something that we all recognize as college-level learning. The more public our expectations about standards for college-level learning, the better chance that student performance will rise to that set of expectations.

The third key terms are assessment and feedback. We will never know whether our expectations have been fulfilled, and students will never know whether their involvement is paying off, unless we regularly get information about learning and keep feeding it back to both faculty and students so their programs can be adjusted accordingly.

It is nonsense to lock people into definitions of excellence that shut large numbers of them out. It makes great sense to stress performance standards and view excellence in terms of how well people perform in relation to their potential.

Kenneth P. Mortimer
President
Western Washington University

To summarize, the three key ingredients of improving quality in undergraduate education are as follows:

- Demonstrable improvement in student knowledge, capacities, and skills.
- Established and clearly expressed standards of performance for awarding degrees.
- Achieving all of this within reasonable canons of efficiency.

Competing Conceptions of Quality

Let me close with what is not in the report and a summary of what we urged the American public to think about, since we advocate a new vision of what constitutes an excellent undergraduate education.

There are three traditional views of excellence at the undergraduate level. The first is the selective view--an institution is excellent if SAT scores of its students are high, or their high school rankings are high. Under this definition Harvard and Swarthmore or the "nifty-fifty" or the 120 selective liberal arts colleges are excellent because they recruit excellent students. The other 2,800 or 2,900 institutions are somehow doomed to the nether regions.

The second major view of excellence at the undergraduate level is expenditure oriented: "If you have money and spend it, you must be good." Heavily endowed institutions or wealthy institutions that have high expenditures per student must be good because they have and spend money.

The third view of excellence is reputation: "We must be good because everybody says we are. Our graduates are famous, we have prestigious faculty and if you do a national opinion poll you will find out that we are very good."

None of these views of excellence has anything to do with what students actually learn from their college experience. These views are elitist in their essence:

- they condemn open door institutions to mediocrity;
- they stress the use of assessment as a sorting and screening device (i.e., "The reason you assess people is so that you can rank them."); and
- they treat people in a hierarchical fashion (i.e., "If you go to one of those places, you must have something wrong with you.").

In fact, they express a rather dim view of education. Under these three views of excellence, in order to be excellent, an institution needs to

recruit bright, highly able and motivated students from stable homes, whose parents have given them all the advantages that personal attention and good schooling can offer.

The Study Group simply rejected that definition of excellence. We urged a view that stresses how well people, programs, departments, or institutions **perform**.

Excellence occurs when people, programs or institutions perform **beyond expected levels**.

It is nonsense to lock people into definitions of excellence that shut large numbers of them out. It makes great sense to stress performance standards and view excellence in terms of how well people perform in relation to their potential. And that is the fundamental message of *Involvement in Learning*.

This article is an edited version of the keynote address which Kenneth Mortimer presented on May 19, 1989 to the Washington Center's conference, "Involvement in Learning."

1988-89 Seed Grants: An Update

A major thread of the Washington Center's work has been the offering of small seed grants (up to \$3000) to support work in curriculum and faculty development. The Center is especially interested in boundary-crossing efforts--between both disciplines and institutions. In the 1988-89 year, the Center funded eight projects. Here are updates on two of them.

Creativity evolved as students became closer to one another and to the faculty, and felt safe in letting their 'real selves' show.

Fran Brewer
Spokane Falls Community College

Learning Communities at Spokane Falls Community College

Spokane Falls Community College has just completed a two-year Seed Grant from the Washington Center to establish learning communities for AA degree students. At the heart of Spokane Fall's learning community planning cycle is the idea of using a "kibitzer," a faculty member given partial released time to act as observer of the learning community, and to coordinate logistics and build continuity between quarters. The "kibitzer" will teach in the learning community program the subsequent quarter. He or she participates in the teaching team's planning sessions, periodically visits the learning community, and coordinates the planning and promotion of the next learning community offering. Spokane Falls faculty say that this simple, low-cost method of coordination has helped build continuity while accelerating the learning process for faculty new to learning community teaching.

The learning community effort began at Spokane Falls in spring, 1988 with "The American Character," a 15-credit offering, taught by Fran Brewer (film), Tom McLuen (history), and Steve Reames (English). Planning started some months earlier when Fran Brewer journeyed to Evergreen for one quarter as an exchange faculty to gain experience with collaborative teaching.

As in most new endeavors, student recruitment has been a challenge. To recruit students faculty distributed information through posters, handbills, the student newspaper, a local radio talk show and classroom visits. They also sent a direct mail announcement to students, and talked extensively with counselors and registration staff.

The first SFCC learning community, "The American Character" was, by all accounts, highly successful. As the quarter progressed, the faculty and students became ever more impressed with the connections that emerged within the subject matter. Faculty reported that "the interdisciplinary nature of the program clearly

contributed greatly to student understanding and skill development. Their writing skills grew because they had the content areas of film and history to write about and the composition, in turn, enhanced the quality of film and history learning."

"Part of what fostered learning," the team reported, "emerged from the social nature of coordinated studies. As students took control of their own agendas in seminars, they gained confidence in their own ideas. This creativity evolved as students became closer to one another and to the faculty, and felt safe in letting their 'real selves' show. Students spontaneously generated study groups and organized outings and parties apart from our organized efforts."

The faculty reported that they also learned a great deal from one another, let go of some old ways, and discovered different teaching approaches. Reames reported, "We learned to make room for our differences and the students were better for it and we were wiser. We shared many things, and collaborative planning was a joy. As we made up the last exam together, Fran remarked that she never wanted to make up an exam alone again."

The team also noted that each of them had to give up a bit of content in their respective coverage courses. Fran could no longer do all she does in film communication, nor Tom in U.S. History nor Steve in English. Looking back though, they all agreed that "the students' impressions from the disciplines have been so reinforced that they are likely to remember essentials longer."

After a successful first quarter with learning communities, other coordinated studies programs have been offered throughout the '88-'89 academic year with "The American Character: The Beginnings," Fall '88, "Human Experience and Human Expression," Winter '89, and "The American Character: 1866-1989," Spring '89.

In terms of student retention and intellectual development, the Spokane Falls programs have been impressive. Spokane Falls participates in the Washington Center's Evaluation Committee and was one

of the schools that piloted the use of the Measure of Intellectual Development instrument. Students in the learning community demonstrated substantial increases in intellectual development on the MID, a trend that has been replicated in many other learning community programs in Washington.

Students reported that they appreciated the emphasis on writing and the integration of content. They also found the social interaction particularly valuable. A telling comment came from a freshman student in that first program: "I always envisioned that college was where I was going to make those 'friends for life' supposedly that my parents had done when they had gone to the big schools....prior to this quarter I hadn't had that in community college. You meet a couple of people in a class, and say good-bye at the end of a quarter. In this program, I've made some friends that I'm sure will be my friends for life."

In fall, 1989 Spokane Falls will continue to offer coordinated studies programs and expand its learning community offerings into linked courses and into developmental studies. *For further information* on the Spokane Falls Community College programs, contact Steven Reames.

Eastern Washington University's Gender-Balancing Project

With support from a Washington Center Seed Grant, Eastern Washington University undertook dissemination of a successful effort to build gender balance into the curriculum. Coordinated by Lee Swedberg, faculty member at Eastern and Director of Women's Programs, the project was co-planned with Gonzaga University, Washington State University, and the Community Colleges of Spokane.

The original EWU-based project involved 23 general education courses and instructors in 17 disciplines. With funds from the Western States Project on Women in the Curriculum (a Ford Foundation funded effort), EWU faculty development funds and the President's Special Fund, resource people worked with the designated faculty to find, screen and organize information on women related to the course. The course instructors then revised their syllabi with the material and compiled bibliographies.

This year's Seed Grant project aimed to involve other institutions in examining and working on the problem of gender balance in their

curricula. First, Eastern held three workshops on gender integration and second, the participating schools each agreed to the integration of materials on women into three new courses. A November workshop focused on "Teaching and Facilitating the Integration Process." Keynote speaker Betty Schmitz (University of Maryland) concentrated on the process of teaching women's content in disciplinary areas.

A second workshop in February, "Expanding the Concept of Gender Balancing" experimented with a number of concepts. Keynoter Joyce Nielsen (University of Colorado) raised basic issues with the notion of concentrating too exclusively on gender balance, arguing that a more pluralistic approach is needed in general. Nielsen argued pointedly that minorities are also neglected and need to be heard. Nielsen suggested that the teaching process itself is often gender-biased. Workshop participants discussed the role of administrators, listened to the perspectives of students, and received reports on the gender balancing integration effort in the three model courses in each institutions. An outstanding feature of the day was a series of short, model integrated lectures.

Central to EWU's final workshop in April was the interface between public policy, community arenas and the academy. A panel of representatives from the National Organization for Women, Washington Women United, other community organizations and church representatives pursued a dialogue with three academic respondents about the needs of women in the curriculum from the community point of view. Corky Bush (University of Montana) led the group in problem-solving and strategic planning techniques.

Building on Eastern's earlier leadership in issues of gender balance, this year's seed grant helped to sustain enthusiasm for the gender balancing effort, and to build a wider dialogue in the region. *For additional information, contact: Lee Swedberg, Eastern Washington University.*

Students join in discussion in "The American Character," Spokane Falls Community College's coordinated studies program offered Spring Quarter, 1989. (Photo: Spokane Falls Community College)



Seed Grants Announced for 1989-90

The Washington Center announces the following seed grants awards for the 1989-90 academic year.

Gonzaga University: \$1500 for a faculty development conference to focus on curricular review and integration. Project directors: RaGena DeAragon and John Downey.

Olympic College: \$900 for a federated learning community program integrating geology, geography and natural history of the Pacific Northwest. Project director: Don Seavy, Biology Department.

Shoreline Community College: \$2000 to develop a prototype integrated foundations communication course in oral and written communications and critical thinking. Project director: Marie Rosenwasser, Humanities Division.

Skagit Valley Community College: \$3000 for a clustered studies program aimed at increasing the retention of returning adult students. Project director: Ted Keeler, Associate Dean.

South Puget Sound Community College: \$3000 for a model, three-quarter writing program involving linking composition courses with lecture courses. Project director: Theresa Crater, English Department.

Spokane Community College: \$3000 to develop a coordinated studies learning community program. Project director: Lynn West, Humanities Division.

Spokane Falls Community College: \$3000 for the development of a program integrating developmental reading, writing, and study skills with college level content courses. Project director: Jan Swinton, Communications.

University of Washington and Shoreline Community College: \$2000 for a conference for nurse educators in the state of Washington to discuss methods for evaluating clinical and cognitive learning. Project director: Anne Loustau, School of Nursing, University of Washington.

University of Washington, Western, Central, and Eastern Washington Universities: \$3000 to provide stipends for 28 teaching assistants to attend the National Teaching Assistant conference at the University of Washington. Project directors: Jody Nyquist and Robert Abbott, Center for Instructional Development and Research.

Seed Grant Call for Proposals for 1990-91 Issued

Guidelines to apply for seed grants for the 90-91 academic year are now available through each participating institution's institutional contact person (listed elsewhere in this newsletter) or through the Washington Center. The deadline to apply for 90-91 is February 9, 1990 for projects beginning July 1, 1990. Preliminary proposals are strongly encouraged, but must be received by January 5, 1990 to receive comments. Only Washington Center consortium schools are eligible to apply for seed grants.

Burlington Northern Grant Will Support Faculty Exchanges

The Burlington Northern Foundation has awarded the Washington Center a grant of \$9000 to support housing subsidies for faculty teaching on exchange between Washington Center institutions. This award builds on an earlier grant of \$22,000 from Burlington Northern.

Spring 1989 Conferences

Annual Curriculum Planning Retreat

Sunny skies prevailed at Camp Warm Beach north of Everett at the Washington Center's fourth annual curriculum planning retreat April 29-30. Thirteen schools sent teams to plan integrated curricula for the 89-90 academic year. Central Washington University, Western Washington University, The Evergreen State College, University of Hawaii-Hilo/Hawaii Community College, and Bellevue, Edmonds, North, Seattle Central, Shoreline, South Puget Sound, Spokane and Tacoma Community Colleges were on hand, with several Washington Center designated "kibitzers" looking on and offering advice.

Washington Association for Developmental Education Joins with the Washington Center for its Annual Conference

With mutual interests in collaborative learning approaches, the Washington Association for Developmental Education (WADE) and the Washington Center joined forces this spring in co-sponsoring WADE's annual May meeting in Seattle. Roberta Matthews of LaGuardia Community College in New York City inspired the gathering with her keynote reflections on "Empowering Developmental Students through Collaboration," and with a workshop on collaborative learning which used materials from the ground breaking American Social History Project. Stephen Brookfield of Columbia University, a noted speaker and writer on adult education and critical thinking, presented an extended workshop for the conference. Conference presenters included many faculty from around the state who have been involved in learning community work, as well as others with interests in team-teaching and collaborative learning approaches.

Involvement in Learning

May 19, the Washington Center's spring conference in Seattle examined "Involvement in Learning," drawing upon the four-year-old national report of the same name on excellence in undergraduate education. The conference combined the perspective of one of the report's major framers, Kenneth Mortimer, now President of Western Washington University, with presentations by faculty members from around Washington who are involved with efforts that reflect the report's recommendations. (Mortimer's speech leads this issue of the NEWS.)

The "Involvement in Learning" conference program also featured Vincent Tinto of Syracuse University. He led two workshops on "Why Students Leave College and What Institutions Can Do about It." Tinto's book, *Leaving College* (University of Chicago Press), is considered a leading work on the causes and cures of student attrition.

Other workshops included two sessions on different learning community models. Deborah Hatch and Claire Sullivan (University of Washington) and Jeffers Chertok and Jois Child (Eastern Washington University) focused on types of linked course models in place at their institutions: the Interdisciplinary Writing Program and Freshman Interest Groups. A different session focused on the coordinated studies approach to learning communities, led by the Seattle Central Community College "Televised Mind" faculty team, Carl Waluconis, Gilda Shepard, Caryn Cline, and Evergreen exchange faculty member Llyn de Danaan.

Other sessions explored issues in multicultural education: the presenters were Evergreen Faculty Members Angela Gilliam, Elizabeth Diffendal, Joye Hardiman, and Hawaii Community College Faculty Member Jan Kido.

The remaining sessions featured several Washington Center Seed Grants. "New Models for Libraries" featured Randall Hensley (University of Washington), and Sara Rideout and Sarah Pedersen (Evergreen). "Building Gender Balance Across the Curriculum" featured Eastern Washington University Faculty Member Lee Swedburg and Gonzaga Faculty Member Eloise Buker. Shoreline Faculty Member Anne McCartney led a workshop on "Establishing a College-Wide Commitment to Critical Reasoning."

Workshop on Perry's Scheme of Intellectual Development

Over the May 20-21 weekend the Washington Center hosted a workshop at the University of Washington. It focused on intellectual development of college students, and featured the work of William Perry, Lee Knefelkamp, and the more recent "women's ways of knowing" work led by Mary Belenky, Blythe Clinchy, Nancy Goldberger and Jill Tarule. William Moore (University of Georgia), Director of the Perry Network and Faith Gabelnick (Dean of the Honors College at Western Michigan University) were leaders for this event. Workshop participants discussed Perry's and related schemes, and gained an introduction to using instruments which gauge students' levels of intellectual development. They also explored the pedagogical implications of these theories.

Seminars,
Conferences
and
Contacts
1989-90

Washington
Center
Seminars and
Conferences

**Introductory Workshop: The
Design and Implementation of
Learning Communities**

October 6, 1989 at Yakima Valley
Community College

**Fall Conference:
"Ways of Knowing"**

Plenary presenters will include
Parker Palmer (author of *To Know
as We are Known*, and Jill Tarule, co-
author of *Women's Ways of Knowing*)
November 2-3, 1990 at the
Westwater Inn, Olympia

**A Retreat on Creating Learning
Communities for the Develop-
mental Level Student**

January 11-12, 1990 at Rainbow
Lodge, North Bend, Washington

**Spring Curriculum
Planning Retreats**

April 20-21, 1990 in eastern Wash-
ington

May 11-12, 1990 in western Wash-
ington

Other Conferences of Interest

Association for General and Liberal Studies

October 18-21, 1989 in Indianapolis

Washington Community College Humanities Association

October 19-20, 1989 in Seattle

2nd National Conference on the Training and Employment of Teaching Assistants: "Preparing the Professoriate of Tomorrow: Enhancing the TA Experience"

November 15-18, 1989 at the
Stouffer Madison Hotel, Seattle

Hosted by the University of
Washington

Contact person:

Jody Nyquist, 206-543-6588

American Association for Higher Education

April 1-4, 1990 in San Francisco

American Association for Community and Junior Colleges

April 22-25, 1990 in Seattle

Washington Center Institutional Contacts



Antioch University - Seattle

Gary Zimmerman, Provost

Mary Lou Finley,

Undergraduate Faculty

Sue Woehrlin,

Undergraduate Faculty

Bellevue Community College

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Patricia Alley, English

Larry Reid, Division Chair,

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Central Washington University

Donald Schliesman,

Dean of Undergraduate Studies

Don Ringe, Chair, General Education

Don Cummings, Acting Dean,

College of Letters, Arts
and Sciences

Centralia College

Vic Freund, Director,

Staff Development

Don Foran, English

Clark College

Bert Glandon, Dean of the Faculty

Erleen Svihovec-Christenson,

Chemistry

Eastern Washington University

Barbara Miller, Assistant Provost

for Undergraduate Studies

Jeffers Chertok, Sociology

Edmonds Community College

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Robert Beardemphl,

Dean of Instruction

Gary London, Political Science

Wadiyah Nelson, Counseling

Gonzaga University

Father Peter Ely,

Academic Vice President

Grays Harbor College

Eugene Schermer, Vice President

for Instruction

Gary Frey, Chair, Humanities

Green River Community College

Bruce Haulman, Social Science

Ted McNeilsmith, Sociology

Highline Community College

Owen Cargol, Dean of Instruction

Robert Eley, Associate Dean

of Instruction

Robin Buchan, History

Lower Columbia College

Don Fuller, Dean for Instruction

Jerry Zimmerman, Social Science

North Seattle

Community College

Lucille Charnley, Dean of Instruction

Jim Harnish, History

Rita Smilkstein, English

David Mitchell, Associate Dean,

Science & Technology

Olympic College

Henry Bell, Dean of Instruction

Marti Lewis, Interim Director,

Social Sciences & Humanities

Lois Rolf, English

Pacific Lutheran University

Norris Peterson, Economics

C. E. Huber, Philosophy

Pierce College

Joan Bevelacqua, Vice President

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Valerie Bystrom, Humanities
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Seattle Pacific University

Thomas Trzyna, Dean, Humanities
Frank Leddusire, Russian

Seattle University

Bernard Steckler, Dean,
Matteo Ricci College II
Carl Swenson, Mathematics
& Computer Science
Judson Shaver, Director
of the Core Curriculum
Robert Larson, Chair, Sociology

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Barbara Adams, Academic
Vice President
Marie Rosenwasser, Chair,
Humanities Division
Virginia Bennett, Speech
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Diane Gould, Humanities

Skagit Valley College

George Delaney, Vice President
Ted Keeler, Associate Dean
Brinton Sprague, Dean,
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South Puget Sound Community College

Mike Beehler, Dean of Instruction
Michael Shurgot, English

South Seattle

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Robert Hester, Dean of Instruction
Michael McCrath, Chair, College
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Tony Embrey, Associate Dean,
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Mike Burns, Chair, English
Lynn West, English

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Paul Jacobsen, Chemistry

The Evergreen State College

Barbara Smith, Academic Dean
Jean MacGregor, Assistant Director,
Washington Center
Rudy Martin, American Studies

University of Puget Sound

Terry Cooney, Associate Dean
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Bonnie Orr, The Success Center
David Lindeblad, Director,
Omak Campus

Western Washington University

Pete Elich, Dean, Arts & Sciences
Roland (Larry) De Lorme, Assistant
Vice President Academic Affairs
William Stoeber, Liberal Studies
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Whatcom Community College

William Christopher, Dean
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Administrative Coordinator
Jan Hagen, Registrar

Yakima Valley

Community College

Gerald Perryman, Dean
Gary Tollefson, Registrar
Judy Moore, Biology
Dennis Konshak, English

Washington Center Group Explores Classroom Research

Classroom research is a term for an informal but systematic process in which faculty members gather data and information about how students are learning the material in their courses. The idea is to create a continuous feedback loop for the teacher, so that he or she can examine and improve the teaching effort. Pat Cross, a national proponent of classroom research, and her colleague Tom Angelo are working to disseminate the approach from their base at University of California-Berkeley. This summer, they held the first in what will be a series of "train the trainer" workshops. Joy Carey (Bellevue Community College), Robert Cole (Evergreen), Nancy Finley and Bruce Kochis (Seattle Central Community College), Kristi Francis (Everett Community College), and Bernie Steckler (Seattle University) attended this event as a Washington Center team.

Separately, Virginia Bennett (Shoreline Community College) and Astrida Onat (Seattle Central Community College) participated in Classroom Research workshops at the second annual Smoky Mountain Seminar of NCRIPAL, the National Center for Research to Improve Post-Secondary Teaching and Learning. Faculty interested in this approach can get in touch with any of these individuals.

Evaluation Committee Summer Retreat

The Washington Center's Evaluation Committee gathered at Evergreen in July for an intensive two-day retreat. This year, the committee has focused its work on learning more about approaches to assessment and evaluation that have greatest applicability to learning communities, and greatest pay-off in terms of improving the teaching and learning process. This summer's workshop included approximately 70 faculty and administrators from 19 different schools.

Alverno College sociologist Stephen Sharkey led a day-long workshop on outcomes assessment. Workshop participants designed hypothetical learning communities and then developed outcomes and assessment designs. Participants were surprised at some of the thoughts the workshop evoked. One participant asked "What the expected outcomes behind our general education requirements? What are the 15 credits in social sciences expected to produce?"

Another participant, quite sure of his own clarity about educational outcomes, was surprised when his team members found his outcomes less clear than he supposed. Another

pondered over the fact that he didn't always give credit for the educational outcomes that he said he valued. A skeptic allowed as how assessment could be a creative part of the learning process, rather than an external accountability system.

The second day of the retreat focused on organizational change issues, and the process of sustaining learning communities. Mark Chesler, University of Michigan sociologist and organizational change theorist, led this session. Members of the Center's Planning Committee and administrators from the participating schools joined the evaluation committee for this event. Cited as important to address in sustaining learning communities were issues such as recruiting more students and faculty to the learning community effort, demonstrating their effectiveness, addressing the concern some faculty have about sacrificing too much content for process, and securing administrative support. Working in small groups the workshop participants quickly brainstormed more than 170 solutions to these problems. Then, working in institutional teams, participants used "force field analysis" to build a plan to address learning community implementation issues on their respective campuses.

What's Happening in Participating Schools: Model Programs and Faculty Exchanges

Bellevue Community College's Fall Quarter learning community, "Close Encounters: Gender and Relationship" will be taught by Pauline Christiansen (English), Laura Kamm (speech), and Helen Taylor (psychology).

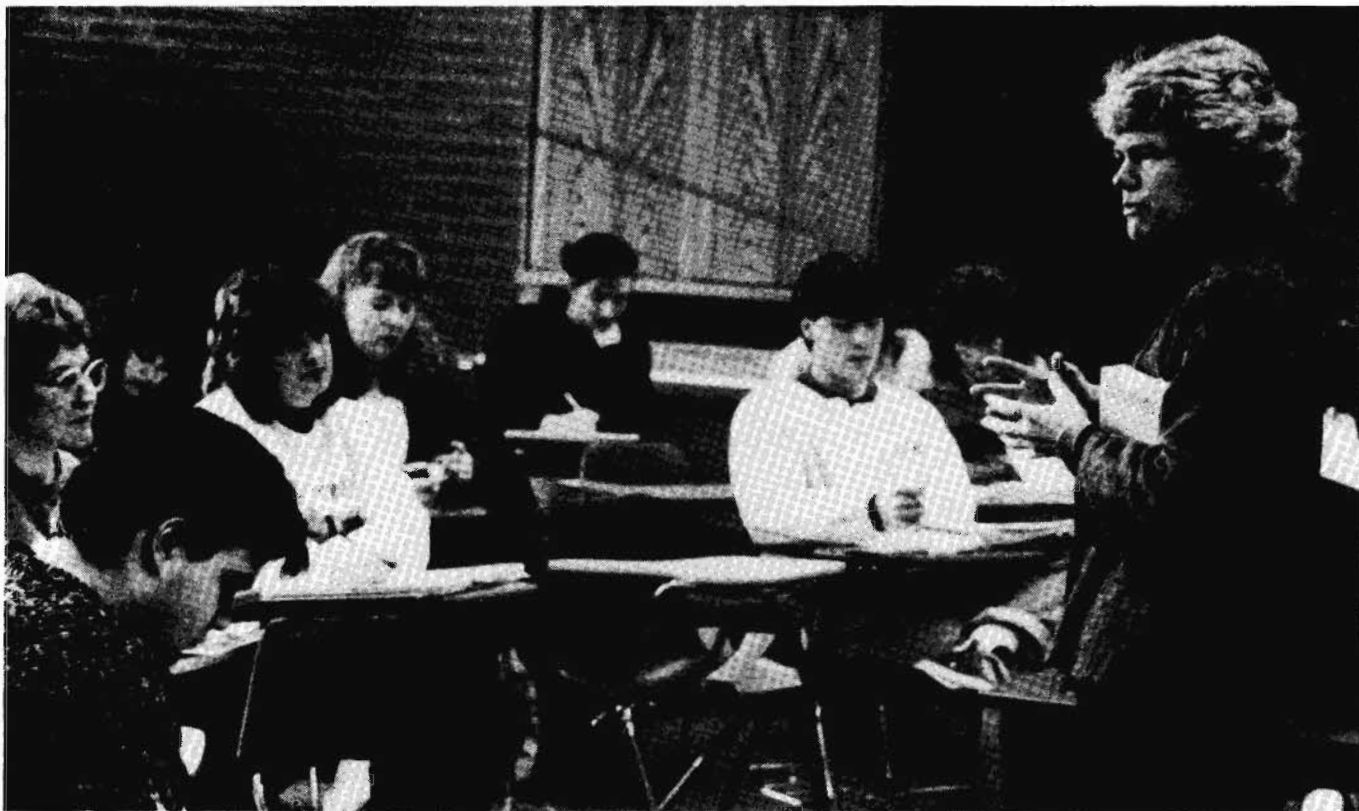
Edmonds Community College will begin offering combined courses in the 1989-90 academic year with three paired courses fall quarter. The first combined class is chemistry and algebra with a focus on problem-solving using the collaborative study group ideas of Berkeley mathematician Uri Treisman; the instructors are Mary O'Brian (chemistry) and David Chalif (mathematics). A second combined class links Western Civilization and study skills with Eileen Soldwedel (history) and Karen Spring. The third combined class is Introduction to Philosophy and English Composition with Jim O'Donnel (English) and Joe Hollinsworth (philosophy).

Everett Community College continues its "Women on the Move To a Four Year Degree" learning community cluster. The Fall Quarter faculty team includes Kristi Francis (English), Dick Brigham (sociology), Laura Hedges and Wadiyah Nelson of the Counseling Center.

Highline Community College Faculty Members Larry Blade (English) and Chuck Miles (speech) are offering a linked class in English and speech this quarter.

North Seattle Community College is offering two learning community programs this fall. "The Russians as People" will be offered for evening students by Faculty Members Rita Smilkstein (English) and Jim Harnish (history). "Ways of Knowing Human Nature: Philosophy, Psychology and Literature," a 15-credit program, will be taught by Tom Kerns (philosophy), Michael Kischner (English), Williams Munns (speech), and Fran Schmitt (psychology).

Pat Nerison, Edmonds Community College faculty member, teaching in last winter's coordinated studies program, "The Right Stuff," which focused on American beliefs and values. (Photo: Edmonds Community College)



Seattle Central Community College is offering ten learning community programs this fall. Included are "Cross Cultural Perspectives in American History" with exchange faculty Jan Kido (University of Hawaii-Hilo), Andre Loñ (English as a Second Language), and Tracy Lai (history); "Coming of Age in the Milky Way" with Evergreen exchange Faculty Member Jan Ott (biology), Jan Ray (mathematics), and David Dawson (English). "The Future of Being Human" is being taught by Nancy Finley (psychology) and Paula Bennett (English). "Through the Looking Glass" is being taught by Susan Jones (English) and Charles Jeffreys (psychology). Minnie Collins (English) and Bobby Righi (mathematics) are offering a developmental level program called "The Joy of Math and English." Other developmental level learning community programs include "Health Care in the 1990's" with Meri Sinnitt (nutrition) and Martha Erwin (English).

An English as a Second Language learning community program called "Building for College Success" is being taught by Verna Penland (ESL), Rebecca Tesdell (ESL), Jennifer Wu (librarian) and staff in the computer science area. Vocational division learning community programs at Seattle Central include "Taking Sides on the Environment," taught by Al Hikida (English and humanities), Susan Helf (law and business), and Jim Hubert (economics); "Of Mind and Body" with Margaret Dickson (nursing), Cheryl Morse (English), and Judie Stein (psychology), and "Myths and Realities in the Workplace" with Liz MacLennan (business), and Rosemary Adang (English).

Shoreline Community College offers a new 17-credit learning community Fall Quarter: "An Integrated Approach: Transition to College" includes English, Sociology, Humanities, and Speech. The program is being team-taught by exchange Faculty Member William Heid from Fairhaven College at Western Washington University, Shoreline speech teacher Barbara Roberts, Debra Jeffs-Grad, and Linda Ehrlich Nelson. The program will probe the meaning of a liberal arts education and the impact of college and American culture while developing broad skills in oral and written communication and critical thinking.

In addition to the full-time learning community program, Shoreline continues its program of combined courses. Four combined classes link writing and content courses. Steve Goetz (biology) and Diane Gould (English) are teaching "Cell to Sentences." Barry Ehrlich (music) and Belden Durtschi (English) are teaching in "Taking Note." "Food for Thought" is taught by Venus Deming (nutrition) and David Wright (English). "An American Way of Writing" is being taught by Lloyd Keith (history) and Amy Mates (English).

Skagit Valley Community College is beginning a developmental level clustered studies program this fall, titled "Choices." The program focuses on the theme of work. Teaching in the Fall Quarter are Trish Barney (English), Linda Moore (reading), Nancy Flint (study skills), and Larry Sult (communication).

South Puget Sound Community College also is launching learning communities this year with a developmental linked course in introductory writing, math and reading taught by Nancy Elliott (English), Joe Townley (human development), and Phyllis Villeneuve (mathematics). In addition, a ten-credit offering links Cosmology and Composition with Shelly Rothschild (art) and Frank Edge (mathematics) and Theresa Crater (English); the "Cosmology" linked course will be available each quarter.

Spokane Falls Community

College is offering paired courses for the first time this fall with "Introduction to Politics" taught by Rudy Alexander and English 101 or 201 with Karen Veselits. A second paired course includes Composition and Art History with Nel Hellenberg (English) and Sharon Wilkins (Art). Spokane Falls is also offering a fifteen-credit Fall learning community titled "The Washington Centennial" with Fran Brewer (English), Steve Reames (literature) and Tom McLuen (history). (In Spring, 1989 Bellevue and Seattle Central Community Colleges also offered programs with centennial themes, to coincide with Washington's 100th birthday. Perhaps we need to find a way to share these common experiences among ourselves and with Washington high schools? Let us know if you are interested.)

Tacoma Community College

begins its second year of ten-credit coordinated studies programs with two offerings. "Autonomy and Community: The Dialectic of Liberty" is being co-taught by Richard Wakefield (English) and John Kinerk (philosophy) and "Rethinking the Future: How Advanced Are We?" is being offered by Bob Thaden (English) and John Geubtner (business). These ten-credit offerings are part of a project supported, in part, by a grant from the League for the Humanities.

Tacoma Community College also continues its lower division bridge program with The Evergreen State College at Evergreen's Tacoma campus. Tacoma Faculty Member Chiyuki Shannon (writing) will teach with Evergreen faculty member Willie Parson (biology) in "Contemporary Ethical Dilemmas." Tacoma counselor Dick Patterson will spend Winter and Spring Quarters at Evergreen.

Under a National Endowment for the Humanities grant, Tacoma Community College is serving as a mentor school for three other community colleges interested in curricular innovation in the humanities. The partner community colleges are Anoka Ramsey in Minneapolis, Northhampton in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and Gadsden State in Alabama. Gael Tower, Humanities Division Chair at Tacoma, reports that the partnerships have been most fruitful.

The University of Washington

continues to expand its successful Freshman Interest Group (FIG) program, with 20 FIG's Fall Quarter that filled to overflowing. Some fall Freshman Interest Groups are specifically aimed at students preparing for certain majors; these include FIGS in Pre-Engineering, Pre-Law, Pre-Science, Pre-Business, and Pre-Law. Other thematic FIGS will be offered in areas such as "The Seven Seas," "The Spectrum of Behavior," "Individual and Society," "Origins of Western Civilization," "The American State," and "Cultural Perspectives." In addition to supporting their academic work, students report that FIG's have been instrumental in helping them adjust to college life and establish friends in a large university setting. Further information on the Freshman Interest Group program is available from Fred Campbell, the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies at University of Washington.

Washington State University

continues to develop links between its National Endowment for the Humanities-funded World Civilizations course and freshman composition courses. Susan McLeod, director of composition at Washington State, is the contact person for information on this new initiative.

Yakima Valley Community

College will offer a 10-credit and a 12-credit learning community Fall Quarter. Judy Moore (biology) and Millie Stenehjem (speech) will teach the ten-credit linked classes. Eric Mould (biology) and Denny Konshak (English) will teach a 12-credit combined course focusing on evolution and literature.



Students in Seattle Central Community College's coordinated studies program, "The Global Village." (Photo: Seattle Central Community College)

Faculty Exchanges

1989-90 faculty exchanges continue with minimal support for housing subsidies from the Burlington Northern Foundation. All the Washington Center exchanges support curriculum innovation by placing the exchange faculty in a learning community program that is team-taught.

Todd Lovington (Seattle Central Community College) will be teaching at Evergreen Fall and Winter Quarters in "Energy Studies" with Evergreen Faculty Member Rob Cole. Evergreen faculty member Janet Ott (biology) will teach at Seattle Central Community College Fall and Winter Quarter. Wayne Luckman (philosophy), Green River Community College is spending the

1989-90 academic year at Evergreen in "A Tale of World Cities" with Evergreen Faculty Members Eric Larson (anthropology), Rob Crawford (sociology), Sarah Pedersen (library science) and Pat Hall (library science). Western Washington University-Fairhaven College Faculty Member Bill Heid (psychology and drama) is teaching at Shoreline Community College this Fall, while Shoreline Faculty Member Anne McCartney journeys to Fairhaven. University of Hawaii-Hilo Faculty Member Jan Kido will teach at Seattle Central Community College Fall Quarter while Seattle Central Faculty Member Rochelle dela Cruz goes to Hawaii-Hilo.

Seattle Central Faculty Member Caryn Cline will teach at Evergreen Fall Quarter in the "Exploration and Discovery" program with Byron Youtz (physics), Tom Rainey (history) and Jaime Kooser (geography).

New Washington Center Member School

The newest institution to join the Center consortium is Grays Harbor College. The institutional contact persons are the Dean of Instruction, Eugene Schermer, and the Chair of Humanities, Gary Frey.

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The Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education

■ Established in 1985 at Evergreen as an inter-institutional consortium devoted to improving undergraduate education. The Center focuses on low-cost, high-yield approaches to educational reform, emphasizing better utilization and sharing of existing resources through inter-institutional collaboration. Established with funding from the Exxon and Ford Foundations, the Center is now supported by the Washington State Legislature.

■ Includes 37 participating institutions: all of the state's public four-year institutions, 24 community colleges, and seven independent colleges.

■ Supports and coordinates inter-institutional faculty exchanges, the development of interdisciplinary "learning community" programs, conferences, seminars and technical assistance on effective approaches to teaching and learning.



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