Greetings colleagues and welcome to the February edition of our newsletter!

I hope everyone is having a productive semester. A lot has happened since January. We presented our position paper *Grow West: A Strategic Plan for the Targeted Advancement of Online Teaching and Learning at UWG* to PAC to a largely positive reception, received some great feedback, and now the hard work of implementing the paper’s seven recommendations is about to begin. We will be looking for volunteers interested in online teaching and learning to serve on various subcommittees to help us turn the paper’s recommendations into actionable and effective guidelines, so, if you are willing to help, please let me know.

We are also well underway with *UWG Online’s* first cohort training series for faculty interested in online teaching and learning. Our first cohort is an amazing and diverse group that is forcing me to rethink some of my own preconceived notions about what makes for effective online teaching and learning. In fact, this group has me thinking a lot about how we will define the role of the college professor in the 21st century. What does it mean to be a “professor of the future?”

There is no easy answer to this. In the past, I think we have largely hired faculty based on content knowledge (as evidenced, generally, by multiple and/or terminal degrees in their respective fields). The system worked on the assumption that these educated faculty would also be good teachers: an assumption that did not always prove true. Outside of certain technology or education fields, little real consideration was given to whether a faculty member had any skill with technology, beyond that required to, say, use a word processor or send an email, or whether they had ever had any training in areas like instructional design, pedagogy, and andragogy. I do not believe this to be a sustainable model any longer.

I see four clear trends emerging about the future direction of higher education:

1. Higher education will be more technologically-enhanced. By this, I do not mean more faculty using PowerPoint. Technology’s primary role will be one of engagement.
Students and faculty will use technology to engage with teaching and learning. Most courses will become “hybrid” in some fashion, and technology will become increasingly important in the delivery of instruction (e.g., learning management systems, “flipped” classroom models, and mobile technologies). 2. *Higher education will be more accessible.* There is a rapidly growing student population who wants and needs to go to college but cannot come, for whatever reason, to a fulltime traditional program. We cannot afford to ignore this audience, and we need to understand them and cater to them where appropriate. 3. *Higher education will be more flexible.* If you read Complete College GA¹, you know there is a big push toward shortening times to degrees, prior learning assessments, competency-based educational approaches, flexible credit transfers, etc. This is the future, and we need to adapt. 4. *Higher education will be more affordable.* Recent data show that tuition and fees have increased as much as 439% from 1982-2007². This is simply unsustainable. If you watched President Obama’s recent State of the Union address, you heard him say “So let me put colleges and universities on notice: If you can’t stop tuition from going up, the funding you get from taxpayers will go down.”³ Competition is going to increase, and costs are going to start coming down. What trends 2-4 have in common are that they are now made doable by technological advancements.

So, what does this mean for the professor of the future? To me, it means that future faculty members will be expected not only to be content area experts but also pedagogical and technological experts as well: they will need to become skilled at “TPACK” (see chart)⁴. The future professor will be a multifaceted individual who understands his/her content area as well as the science behind how and why people learn. He or she will be able to use all of this knowledge to design instruction for technology-enhanced learning environments that cater to much more diverse student populations. This is no small feat, and it comes with its own set of new issues.

²Taken from: [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/03/education/03college.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/03/education/03college.html)
³Taken from: [http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/01/24/remarks-president-state-union-address](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/01/24/remarks-president-state-union-address)
⁴Taken from: [http://tpack.org](http://tpack.org)
I can understand why such a definition of the future professor would make many people nervous. Let me be clear here: I do not believe traditional higher education is going away; I do not, for a minute, think university campuses are a thing of the past; I certainly do not think that professors are going to be replaced with computers. I am just saying we have to evolve and make smart choices. If we ignore these four trends and their impact on our profession, we run the risk of becoming as obsolete as getting film developed, renting movies from stores, reading paper maps, posting in newspaper classifieds, talking on public payphones, playing movies on VCRs, and shopping at record stores…you get the idea. All of these “mainstays” of the past were too slow in adapting to a changing world. The future professor (and the future university) will need to be more nimble.

So, what do you think? Am I right with my ideas about the professor of the future? The future of education? Send me an email with your thoughts if you want.

On to the newsletter!

In this newsletter, we meet Michael Smallwood—a 50-plus year old UWG student finishing his business degree online. Our fun-loving, techno-geek graduate assistant, Chase O’Gwin, is profiled in our “Meet the Staff” section, and we hear from Patricia Riley, an online instructor from the Criminology Department in our “Online Faculty Spotlight.”

As usual, enjoy the rest of the newsletter and, if you have any feedback or ideas for inclusion, please send them our way.

Cheers,

Jason
Hello, my name is Michael Smallwood. I am a 50-plus-year-old non-traditional student. I have returned, finally, to finish my degree here at the University of West Georgia in Business. I started this task a long time ago in 1981 at the University of Maryland, while serving in the United States Air Force. As my time and energies were mainly utilized within a demanding career with lots of overtime in order to survive after the service, and along with not being able to afford college, my education soon took a backseat until better times came along. I have relocated across the United States about three times, once alone and twice with my family, but we finally settled in Georgia in 1995. I then gathered all my credits and applied to the University of West Georgia; I was accepted and began taking classes offered at the Newnan Campus. In the beginning, I only took one class at a time because of tuition fees, working full time and supporting a family with two children. Skipping forward to many years later, and just recently after my son graduated from NASCAR Technical School, I decided to get serious; my daughter would be soon graduating from high school and the timing seemed right.

I began seriously attending UWG in the Spring of 2009 after just missing registration for Fall 2008. I again started slow and returned to the Newnan Campus to make sure my work schedule and my school schedule did not conflict with each other. I soon found myself here on the main campus taking classes in the evenings. The online classes have helped me tremendously because it has given me the opportunity to take up to three classes a semester and still allows me to work a full time job while fulfilling my responsibilities to home and work. The biggest help for me has been the classes offered during the summer semesters; these have allowed me the advantage of taking classes in a shorter time period, while not interfering with the busy work and vacation schedules of my employees. As of today, I am hoping to be on task for graduation in July, one full semester ahead of my personal schedule, again, thanks to those summer online classes.

I am West Georgia, and I am an online student.
Meet the Staff

Chase O’Gwin
Graduate Assistant

I received a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Brigham Young University with an emphasis on Theory and Philosophy of Psychology. Currently, I am working on a Masters degree in Humanistic Psychology here at UWG; my thesis covers a cognitive study of horror.

I guess it would be easy to divide my specialties and interests into two areas: psychology and technology; sometimes I get lucky and the two intertwine. Before recently continuing my education at UWG, I spent five years as a team leader for technical and customer support teams. I am a graduate assistant for the Department of Distance and Distributed Education and work within UWG Online’s Faculty Development Center. I help professors and students participating in online instruction and learning, work through problems they experience within, as well as outside of, Course-Den. I also assist UWG Online Instructional Designers in coming up with new and effective methods of presenting instructional materials and resources to faculty and students. I enjoy working with Google Apps and Microsoft Office; I find these powerful tools are often under-utilized.

My interests in psychology include Theistic Psychology, personality theory, and the psychology of horror. In regards to my professional interests, I am interested in education and the use of cutting-edge technology within the classroom. I love ideas and problems related to the use of technology in order to facilitate ease and understanding, while also actively engaging students.

Between work, school, my wife and two children (ages 2 and 6-months) I find I have precious little free time, but when I do have it, I try and parse it between a variety of things. I love to watch horror movies and I collect comic books, principally Batman. I also enjoy the occasional video game, as well as the game of Dungeons and Dragons.

I think my favorite resource for supporting distance education has got to be Google Apps. Each one of its applications has a myriad of uses; anyone can use and access them; they are compatible with any system. Google Docs, Sites, and Google Plus have an infinite potential for use in distance education and in the classroom, especially when sharing and making information accessible. Ask me about it sometime and I can show you some pretty cool things you can do with them.
Our department sees the use of online instruction and services as a tremendous opportunity to accomplish two important goals:

1) To provide educational access to students who are incapable of commuting to UWG for face-to-face classes or whom require the scheduling flexibility online instruction offers.
2) To teach rigorous courses that make the best use of online technologies in the pursuit of our mission of educational excellence in a personal environment.

Faculty in Sociology have a wide range of familiarity and use of CourseDen and other distance education software/services. Several faculty (Drs. Hunt, Matthews and Noori, and Professors Parsons and Tripp) have taught fully online courses, while others use CourseDen largely as an enhancement for their face-to-face classes. The big plus of these tools is how they can add variety to the way courses are taught, by utilizing different modes to impart knowledge and facilitate higher-order forms of learning. Responses from students have been positive about these multiple modes of learning, though the key, as research has shown, is frequent instructor participation and feedback. Fortunately our faculty are highly engaged and committed instructors of excellence who are up to the challenge.

Courses in Sociology that have been offered online include: Introductory Sociology, Introduction to Social Problems, Research Methodology, Statistics, Deviance, Globalization and Crime, and Social Movements. Upcoming online course offerings include: Introductory Sociology, Introduction to Social Problems, Research Methodology, Statistics, Globalization and Violence against Women.

Sociology is a field of study growing in popularity at UWG at the undergraduate and graduate levels, and online instruction will certainly help fuel continued growth in the future. Much of what we do focuses on issues of social inequality and social justice, and as we have seen in the Middle East in the past year (i.e. the “Arab Spring”) and here in the U.S. more recently (the “Occupy” movement), the online environment is a key site for social action and activism. Thus, students of contemporary social life should develop proficiency in this online environment, and our faculty are committed to engaging in relevant training in these platforms while retaining our core focus of fostering the development of critical thinking and effective communication skills.

We are continuously engaged in critical self-assessment and we are committed to making our course delivery as effective and engaging for the students as possible, while maintaining the highest academic and professional standards. Thus, I don’t have specifics today, but keep an eye on us!

-Todd Matthews

*Interim Chair & Assistant Professor of Sociology*
Online Teaching Tools

**SlideRocket Lite (Make an Impact!)**
Facilitate a media-driven educational experience with SlideRocket Lite, a free presentation tool. This easy-to-use tool helps create visually intriguing presentations that support dynamic audio, visual, and general informational content. SlideRocket Lite allows you to easily access and share presentations whether offline, online, or mobile; reach students and colleagues quickly and with affect.

**CAST UDL Book Builder (Support Diverse Learners!)**
Use this free resource to create, share, publish, and read digital books that engage and support diverse learners according to their individual needs, interests, and skills. Share this resource with students by incorporating it into course curriculum, emphasizing the importance and affect of differentiated learning. Read more about Universal Design for Learning (UDL) guidelines for authoring [here](#).

**Google+ (Building Community!)**
Google+ allows for a high level of student-to-student and instructor-to-student interaction via Hangouts, Circles, Sparks, and Huddles. While often strictly referred to as a fairly new avenue for Social Media, Google+ has been slotted for supporting online learning environments. Get started and peruse extensive Google+ scenarios and applicability to online education. Responsive to contemporary student needs, Google+ is intuitive to use and offers mobile accessibility; share interests (Sparks), engage students via videoconferencing (Hangouts), control sharing and grouping (Circles), and keep in touch with students (Huddles)!

Media Plugs of the Month

**Ken Robinson: Changing Education Paradigms**
In this featured [TED Talk](#), Sir Ken Robinson lays out the links between three contemporary, and fairly troubling trends seen in education: rising drop-out rates, schools' lessening of the value of the aesthetic within instruction and in general, and the prevalence of medicating today's youth: an important, timely talk for educators, students, and the general public.

**Alexis Ohanian: How to Make a Splash in Social Media**
In a funny, rapid-fire 4 minutes, Alexis Ohanian of [Reddit](#) tells the real-life fable of one humpback whale's rise to Web stardom. Apply a few easy-to-remember-mantras to your Social Media approach and come out on the upside of this growing method of outreach and communication.

**The 21st Century Learner**
From [EDU Tube](#), *The 21st Century Learner*, looks at The Digital Youth, media immersion, and the 'importance of reflection in learning.'
Online News & Notes

Online Learning Factoid of the Month:
Right now, the majority of US students in higher education still take all their courses in physical classrooms. However, research is predicting that by 2014 the majority of students in higher education will be taking a combination of online and face-to-face classes. (Source: Ambient Insight “US Self-Paced eLearning Market”)

If you only Try One Thing this month, try this:
Animoto— Sign up now for a free Animoto educator account! Give your content a boost by creating unique audio-visual productions. Incorporate course and module introductory videos to preface content, while simultaneously adding personality to your courses. Videos are quick to produce and easy to share. Simply choose your images and music, watch, then share via a direct URL link.

If you are Adventurous check out:
Bubbl.us— This free online tool is available for faculty and student collaboration: create mind maps and share them with others over the web. This tool can help students get started and complete group activities within their online courses; Bubbl.us organizes ideas, synching thoughts and information remotely. This tool can be used to encourage student interaction, in both asynchronous and synchronous online environments.

Professional Development

Karl Kapp on Gamification & eLearning
Wednesday, February 22, 1:00-2:00 p.m.
Within this live interview, Dr. Karl Kapp, distinguished author and expert on simulations and games in eLearning, will be prompted to explore and discuss the research and theoretical foundations behind effective game-based learning, including reward schedules, the use of avatars, and games for teaching pro-social behaviors. Register.

Building Interactive Articles for Peer-Reviewed Journals with SoftChalk
Wednesday, February 22, 3:00-4:00 p.m.
Interactive articles (and e-books) are an enriched form of digital publication which may build exploration, interactivity, and value-added learning for readers. These articles integrate multimedia and other digital contents, and are accessible and have mobile friendly content. This webinar will focus on organizational structure, strategic “activity” selection and multimedia choices, and tailoring to a broad audience. Register.

Creating Educational Games in Adobe Captivate with Joe Ganci
Wednesday, February 29, 1:00-2:00 p.m.
Games can be beneficial in helping learners retain what they learn. Of course, games can also distract from the content, so you must plan carefully what kind of games to include in your learning. During this session, the factors that must be considered in choosing or building games for learning will be discussed. You will also be shown how to create a learning game in Adobe Captivate, as well as will receive a free copy of a game for your own use! Register.
Training & Workshops: UWG Online Spring 2012: Getting Started & FDC Open House

The following events are scheduled drop-in sessions to be held at the Faculty Development Center:

Directions to FDC

For more information contact Debra Robinson @ debrar@westga.edu
or Matias Marabotto @ mmarabot@westga.edu

Smarthinking Webinar
February 28: 4pm & 5pm
Learn More and Register Here

DAA: Discussions, Assignments & Assessments
February 29: 1am-3pm

For an extensive day-to-day account of upcoming available Training Sessions & Workshops offered by UWG ONLINE click here and select UWG ONLINE from the category list.

Online Faculty Kudos

We would like to commend the following faculty on their efforts and achievements!

Yan Yang, PhD: Assistant Professor, Educational Psychology
Dr. Yang is currently using PBWorks to educate students on building their own professional profiles and documenting all of their academic and specialized efforts in order to prepare themselves for a future career in education. Dr. Yang exemplifies via a personal PBWorks wiki: check it out! Get started with a free account for educators.

Juliet Haarbauer-Krupa, PhD: Assistant Professor, Collaborative Support & Intervention
While this is Dr. Haarbauer-Krupa’s first semester teaching online at UWG, she has had prior experience and exposure to distance learning in the past...around the early 90s, using primarily the telephone to communicate aspects of instruction. Today, the professor takes additional steps to interact with students by utilizing Blackboard IM, free to all UWG faculty and students; specifically Dr. Haarbauer-Krupa uses the IM and Collaborate Whiteboard functions to interact with students. Dr. Haarbauer-Krupa offers this bit of advice: “For the first lecture I used this application and had many complaints from students...my audio was not synced with the slides and information imported ‘on-the-fly’ appeared intermittently, without flow. UWG Online informed me to import content into the Whiteboard ahead of time instead. This was much more consistent with syncing and gave forth fewer interruptions. No student complaints!” Kudos to Dr. H-K for taking the extra steps to provide students with an optimal learning environment!
Online Faculty Spotlight

Patricia Riley
Instructor of Criminology

*My* name is Patricia Riley and I am a full-time, online Criminology instructor. I have been teaching online courses for a couple of years; I have also been an online student, which gives me some insight into what it is like to receive instruction within an online environment. Keeping students engaged in an online course can be challenging: students want a format that they are familiar with. This is oftentimes challenging as an instructor. I try to balance traditional teaching methods with innovative online methods that will keep students interested and engaged in the online classroom. In order to facilitate this, I require weekly discussions within my courses. The discussions are designed to help students think critically about the material we are covering and to apply that material to real world examples. For example, this past fall, in Criminal Profiling, we discussed case studies, many of which were current events. The students used the information they had learned from the weekly lectures and readings to make inferences on the cases and to engage one another about the inferences they had made. The students also applied what they had learned to a real-life, unsolved case. I find it effective to incorporate current, real-life events with asynchronous student interaction, in order to encourage student participation. I also like to provide students with visual and auditory material. It is important to recognize that students have different learning styles. The online format works well for visual learners but can be challenging to auditory learners. To appeal to all types of learners, I try to provide links to pertinent videos or websites that apply to our topic. I also require supplemental readings from journal articles and various other resources on the internet. The students seem to enjoy a break from traditional textbook readings and respond well to real-life examples.

Another challenging area for online students is communication with the instructor and seeking, as well as receiving, help. I try to make myself available to my students by holding virtual office hours via Wimba every morning. I also make a point to respond to emails within a few hours, and to respond to as many student discussion posts as I can each week. This lets my students know that I am actively engaged in my courses, not just passively monitoring them. I also try to provide as many resources as I can. On the homepage of each of my online classes I have an APA Module, an Essay Module, a Criminology Resource Module, and a CourseDen Module. I also have specialized help modules in some of the courses. Importantly, I am always open to new ideas and new technologies that will make the online classroom even more engaging for students.
Questions & Submissions

For questions, suggestions, or items to include in the next newsletter such as:

*Upcoming Events, Workshops, & Trainings
*Publications & Other Achievements
*Online Teaching/Learning News & Insights

Please contact Rhea Wojcik:

rheaw@westga.edu

We look forward to learning about and sharing your experiences and achievements.

Thank you for your contributions!

Check it out: UWG Online Newsletter Archives

UWG ONLINE CHALLENGE

The first person to email the correct answers to the following questions will win something cool!

1. What has been the most beneficial aspect of online classes for Mr. Smallwood?

2. Keeping students engaged in an online learning environment can be challenging; name two ways in which Patricia Riley works to bypass disengagement.

3. Name the free online instructional resource that works to support diverse learners through content authoring.

Please email rheaw@westga.edu: list your full name, contact information and your department. All questions must be answered correctly and previous winners are ineligible (we are trying to spread the love around.) Items awarded are for faculty use and will be transferred to department inventory.

Thank you!