

# Summer Institute Reunion

## Thursday, December 6, 2001

We asked you for feedback about the Institute from each of you now that the Fall semester is drawing to a close. Below are the responses we received. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated, and your input will be used to help plan the Summer Institute 2002.

1. *Were you able to work on activities related to your teaching or project during the summer - June, July and August? If so, what did you do? Did your participation in the Institute influence the work that you did?*

"Yes, I did. I revised the course syllabus incorporating suggestions from the Summer Institute. I got in touch with the Writing Lab on campus to discuss some issues. I am a bit of a perfectionist and still work on the syllabus."  
-2001 participant

"I have not yet done much solid work yet on revising my course, since I'm teaching it in the spring and have been occupied with other matters this fall. But I've been thinking about it quite a lot. The most illuminating and memorable sessions (other than the pure work-with-my-team sessions) I found to be the one from Jenny Saffran about developing her child psychology course (an AWESOME presentation) and the discussion about using newer instructional technology (misleadingly referred to repeatedly as "technology," as if a blackboard and readings weren't technology). The most important thing I got out of these sessions were the tales about the limitations of using PowerPoint and similar forms to jazz up one's class (something I'd thought about doing); my conclusion from this was that I would do well to learn to use PowerPoint but to limit my usage of it to a few lectures—partly so as not to get overwhelmed with the technological aspects (to the detriment of working on the content) and partly so that students wouldn't get used to it. At the same time, I also learned from Prof. Saffran about the possibilities of using an Oprah-style microphone to get students to say things everyone in a large lecture can hear (and also to get the prof. to mix it up, and to get away from the lectern), and even the possibility of a remote mouse (to move the Powerpoint slides forward). So those ideas about technology were very helpful to me."

-2001 participant

"During the summer, I developed 2 new lab exercises to complement the didactic component of 718-420 (Introduction to Drug Delivery and Action) which is a required course for first year Pharm D students during the fall semester. This is also the only basic science course with a laboratory component. In addition, I worked in my interdisciplinary biomaterials course offered every spring semester. For this course, I updated the course website, electronically transcribed previous student/guest lecturers' presentations, re-organized the presentation of didactic components. The participation in TASI greatly influenced this work. Specifically, I clearly identified course vs learning (facts vs critical thinking) objectives, incorporated critical thinking objectives, re-formatted review/discussion sessions (i.e., use old exams to explain why certain questions were posted to incite individual critical thinking and incorporation of multiple disciplines), provided previous years' course/teaching evaluations to sustain the continuity of the course, etc."

-2001 participant

"My teaching is such an important portion of my responsibilities that I constantly try to keep it as a priority. The summer institute influenced greatly my thinking and how I actually modified some components of my fall semester classes."

-2001 participant

"I continue to be involved in Biology 151/2's effort to establish web-based tutorials, especially in the areas I teach (cell structure and physiology); this was the focus of our group's work at the 2000 Summer Institute. This fall, I attended a session to examine the first tutorial product on thermodynamics (notoriously hard to teach), and it looks promising."

-2000 participant

"We have been working on the agroecology curriculum ever since TASI. The vision that emerged from our discussions that week has endured. We have been broadening participation and filling in details at a steady, but quite rewarding, rate. The wonderful environment provided by the Institute surely contributed to the emergence of this compelling vision for a new MSc degree."

-2001 participant

"I am one of several faculty who teach Hist. Sci./ILS 202, the course for which we attended the Institute. However I will only be teaching 202 myself again in Spring 2003. Accordingly, while I did some work on teaching in the summer (largely preparing the syllabus and course reader for a different course), this was more strongly influenced by my experience teaching that course last year than by my participation in the Institute."

-2001 participant

"Yes. I reorganized the order of topics I cover in my Econ 102 lecture and included a few new topics and deleted some other topics. This was one of my main goals for the Summer Institute. I wanted to think about exactly what items should be covered in class and what items that are traditionally covered actually take time away from other more relevant topics. The Summer Institute gave me the initial push to overhaul my class. Because I was able to generate a broad outline of what I wanted to accomplish during the individual time at the Summer Institute, I was then able to implement the changes in my syllabus over the summer. I have been following the new format during this fall 2001 semester. I like it better, but I have not yet received student evaluations to see if the students like the class and its new format better.

"Without the Summer Institute I might have revised my class on my own. But I certainly felt a greater motivation to do so because of participation in the Institute. I was also able to incorporate some ideas that were presented during some of the sessions. This would not have happened if I had not participated in the Institute."

-2001 participant

"Yes, I designed a course for social work students who are new to the MSW program. The course is titled: SW605: The Field of Social Work. I began by taking a WEB-CT course prior to the summer workshop, but was unable to find time to actually put the course up on WEB-CT, as the work required more time than I could devote to it. I subsequently attended the Summer Institute and used the things I learned there to redesign the course, especially the assignments. I also upgraded my technological resources and skills to make better use of digital photography and PowerPoint presentations. "

-2001 participant

"In a round-about kind of way. The course I worked on at the Institute is actually yet to be taught (spring 2002), so I spent most of the summer on the immediate problem: fall semester. However, I was amazed at how much differently I found myself organizing what had already been a pretty popular course thanks to our Institute discussions. I included even more time for discussion and variety of activities--and the students really love it. (I think I might have done this anyway to keep myself entertained, but the Institute "stamp of approval" certainly didn't hurt!) What really came in handy, though, were the several sessions/discussions on techniques for dealing with large classes (especially that young psych. professor's presentation). Just before classes started, I found out that my undergraduate survey course had DOUBLED in enrollment from the previous year--and, I can tell you, I was telling them to 'just e-mail me,' breaking into small groups so students could get to know each other and the like right and left."

-2001 participant

2. *Are you teaching differently this Fall as a result of your participation in the Institute? For example, are you using class time differently, using different activities/assignments/evaluation techniques, covering different content?*

"I am on leave this semester and not teaching, but I am sure that participation in the Summer Institute will have a great impact on my future teaching. It was a very valuable opportunity for me. I very much hope that other faculty will get a chance to participate in future."

-2001 participant

"Not yet. But I do expect to do my large class quite differently in the spring, based on some ideas I developed with my team toward the end of the Institute. It took all of that time to get me to the point of what I consider to be a real breakthrough—structuring the course around the ways historians ask questions and seek to answer them—explicitly demonstrating that process—rather than presenting the students with a set narrative about “what happened.” I will continue to deliver the information in lectures, of course; but I think that by treating the course as a common inquiry rather than a story they need to learn, I will be more successful in getting them engaged in the process of doing history. (Check in with me late next semester to see how it’s coming off...)"

-2001 participant

"As a result of my participating in TASI, I conducted my fall class differently. This includes: Reformat orientation: i.e., brought in faculty of future classes to instill the importance of subject matter and learning objectives of my class; presented previous years’ mid-semester and course/teaching evaluations. Different activities/assignments: i.e., required and introduced real-life applications and situations of the basic science concepts taught in the lecture. Different contents: i.e., applied engineering and non-pharmaceutic principles to understand the growing field and the interdisciplinary nature of the profession."

-2001 participant

"Since the Summer Institute, I have taken a different approach to written assignments. I am more demanding of my students in term of writing skills because it was at the Summer Institute that the link between (critical?) thinking skills and writing skills became evident to me!!! (should have thought of that earlier, but somehow it never occurred to me!) Keep up the good work."

-2001 participant

"Since I teach studio design courses, my lectures have always been heavy with visuals and the studio experience inherently involves student participation. So my main focus in response to what I learned at the Teaching Academy Summer Institute has been on effective use of digital technology, though I have incorporated some of the wonderful style approaches to teaching that our speaker from Psychology introduced.

"One of the areas where I have introduced digital technology is that I now have WEB CT pages for two of my classes, and will have the 3rd course up for spring. I use WEB CT to distribute information about project requirements and to put up study notes for tests as well as publish the syllabus, course policies, etc. I have also used the digital camera purchased with Teaching Academy grant monies to photograph project sites and then put those images on WEB CT so that students have access to them while working on those interior spaces. The camera is also being used by students to photograph their projects and then put the images into Photoshop and PageMaker to prepare digital image based portfolios. As I use WEB CT I have kept in mind one of the comments that stuck with me from one of our speakers -- that was that students will use WEB CT to get info that will help them do something, not just to read info. Thus, I have used WEB CT to help students prepare for class exercises, get data they need to use in a design project, and to get notes that will help them prepare for exams. For articles and readings I use the electronic reserves at Steenbock.

"Another change I have made in another beginning level course, is to start each class with review questions - like an oral mini-quiz - from the previous week's topic. This gets the students involved in the class and also helps them review/study what I think they ought to know as we are going along. They seem to respond well and participate. I have also incorporated into project descriptions the learning objectives of each project so they understand why they are doing a project and what the emphasis/focus of their design solution should be."

-2000 participant

"Yes, and I will be making much greater use next semester of the myriad ideas for genuine learning that are presented and reinforced in all of the faculty development programs on campus. TASI is an important part of this system of faculty development."

-2001 Participant

"This is only my second year of teaching - and I am teaching differently this Fall! I believe in part this comes as a result of my participation in the Institute, but more importantly through building on my experience giving lectures and running seminars last year. At the moment the influence of the Institute is largely indirect, through providing a number of inspiring examples - especially Jenny Saffran's lecture and some of Tim Allen's discussion - that help me in thinking about my own style of lecturing.

"Next semester I teach two new courses: a research seminar for Honors students, and an upper level lecture course. Because both involve a different format than the survey classes and graduate seminars I have taught to date, I will be thinking again about my use of class time and the kinds of discussion and writing assignments I set. I plan on drawing on my notes and some of the written material available at the Institute, and anticipate these will help me introduce more variety into my approach. In Spring 2003 I will teach Hist. Sci./ILS 202, and believe that when I do the discussions our group was able to carry out at the Institute will help me cover new content."

-2001 Participant

"Yes. I am definitely teaching some topics in a different order than in the past and including some new content. I tried to create a more coherent framework in which to view the individual topics covered in this class. I also included one major new assignment that came about because of discussions at the Institute. As I have not yet received student feedback, I do not yet know if this was a success or not. But I think it was a good idea.

"I did not change my use of class time in a significant way because I teach very large lectures. I am still dealing with the limitations of the large lecture halls with 300+ students in them. However, I did try to generate more discussion in lecture. That seemed to happen this semester, but it is impractical to break into groups or do any one-on-one activities with this size of a class.

"For the 2002 Summer Institute, I would suggest adding some small group sessions on teaching large lectures versus teaching small classes or seminars. The dynamics in a large lecture hall and the type of activities that can be done with a large class are different than those for a small class. I would be interested to hear how other people manage large groups of TAs, many of whom do not speak English well and how other people deal with exam conflicts and some of the practical matters of managing a large class.

"I really enjoyed the Summer Institute. I hope it has improved my teaching, but I am probably not the best judge of that. I also appreciated the opportunity to meet other people on campus who are interested in teaching. I do not feel so isolated. As a side note, I am now travelling to Latvia in January to teach because of a contact I made at the Summer Institute. This new development has recharged both my teaching and my research. It came about because of the Summer Institute. So keep up the good work!"

-2001 Participant

"Happily, I can report that I continue to think frequently about the Institute and the ideas it spawned. I have reviewed my notes from the Institute several times, searching for tidbits I may have overlooked at the time. Although participation in the Institute stimulated much thinking and allowed me time to plan a renovation of a course sequence, it hasn't, of course, solved all the dilemmas I face in teaching. I wish there were an ongoing forum for discussion of university teaching with peers.

"My only criticism of the Institute at the time was regarding the use of the small group time. I appreciate that the Institute leaders tried not be too directive, but I thought at the time (and feel even more strongly now) that some additional structure - and modeling of particular small group methods- would have increased the value of the Institute for me. However, I participated in the first Institute, and use of small group time may have been different last summer. Again, thank you for your time and attention to the serious matter of university teaching."

-2000 Participant

"Yes to all of the above. It was a wonderful experience and helped me think through what was important to me to accomplish in this new, and much larger course, than I typically teach. Perhaps what I am most happy about is one of the assignments I designed, which built on the Biocore use of poster sessions. Students worked in groups of four for this assignment, which was a building block for a final paper, developed in several steps. What was especially nice about the poster session is that I decided to hold it in the hallways of Social Work, took pictures, and eventually showed the students and colleagues in the School, a Powerpoint presentation that I developed of the poster session. This was done with a digital camera I purchased with funds from the Teaching Academy. I will attach the presentation for your perusal.

"Next fall, when I teach the course again, I will make a number of modifications, as the assignments placed a heavier burden on me than I anticipated. Grading the poster sessions in the hall was difficult as interested visitors continually interrupted me. Very rewarding to see the enthusiasm it generated in the School, but I eventually had to come in the evening and weekend to grade them, with the help of a grader. The paper has had four parts, the first a statement of the focus of the paper; second, an annotated bibliography; third a first draft (I just completed reading 56 of these and giving personalized comments to each), and fourth, yet to come, a final draft. Students seem to have really liked the course, but I will probably lighten up on the reading and make the assignments less demanding (yet to be determined). I feel more competent as a teacher, and more interested in the students and the subject matter, having had the Teaching Academy experience. Thank you all for supporting this and making it available!"

-2001 Participant

"Again, I sure am. In particular, I have spent much more time on student writing--requiring drafts and permitting additional revisions if students wish. I can't tell you how many fruitful discussions I've had with students in and out of office hours about their essays. I'm sure many of them were motivated by the strict grading on the drafts (an incentive to do a good job on the rewrite), but nonetheless their writing has certainly improved over the course of the semester. Again, I might have done this anyway, but it was really reassuring as a new teacher to hear from people who had done so in the past. Brad Hughes in particular was wonderful. In fact, I've transformed one of my spring course (still not the one for the Institute!) into a writing intensive class. The department likes this and I think the students will get more out of the texts we read.

"As for the actual Institute course: I'll keep you posted! I really recommend having a semester in between the Institute session and the new course--it allowed me to experiment with different techniques without worrying about the material itself. Now some of the techniques are old hat, and I can focus my energies on creating new lectures/etc...

"Thanks so much! I have to admit, right after the Institute I wasn't sure how useful it had been (many of the sessions had seemed a bit abstract), but I can see as I write this how much I learned. I'm still not convinced about the 'students as teachers' bit, but they certainly are better students when we teachers give them more responsibility!"

-2001 Participant