

## RESOURCES TO HELP YOU RESPOND EFFECTIVELY TO YOUR SOTE RESULTS

### ***INTRODUCTION: HOW TO MAKE SENSE OF YOUR SOTE'S***

The following is a break down of the SOTE items into five categories that represent the various aspects of the teaching/learning process. Within each category, I provide some questions to help you think about that aspect of your teaching as well as links to resources that may be of help. In addition, please consider contacting the Center for Faculty Development for assistance. They can refer you to appropriate Faculty-in-Residence who are working at the Center and can provide either workshops or individual consultations related to your particular needs. We are here to support you to succeed with your students.

In addition to the resources within each category of teaching effectiveness, I would like to recommend two books that I have found extremely useful in providing an overview of the issues, problems, and strategies related to university teaching effectiveness. I highly recommend them to you. They include:

Bain, K. (2004). *What the best college teachers do*. Boston, Mass: Harvard University Press.

*Go online to Amazon.com where you can view the first few pages of the book, including the Table of Contents). In this book, Ken Bain summarizes five years of research talking with identified outstanding professors from public, private, large, and small universities and colleges with a broad array of student populations. The book provides a glimpse of how these outstanding professors prepare to teach, what they expect of their students, how they conduct class, how they treat students, and how they evaluate students.*

Lang, J. M., *Life on the Tenure Track: Lessons from the First Year* (Paperback) (2005). Baltimore Maryland: Johns Hopkins Press.

*This book is written by a first year tenure track professor who is trying to balance home/personal issues with his responsibilities at the university. It is an easy read and gives an accurate account of the stresses facing new professors, together with a perspective on how to respond to these pressures.*

**The Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL)** was launched in 1998 in an effort to 1) foster significant, long-lasting learning for all students, 2) enhance the practice and profession of teaching, and 3) bring to faculty members' work as teachers the recognition and reward afforded to other forms of scholarly work. CASTL entails work on several fronts to establish and refine scholarly standards for the critical review of work on teaching and learning; it also attempts to establish new settings, forums and forms through which the scholarship of teaching and learning can be exchanged widely and built upon. These activities support the development of new models of teaching that foster deep and lasting understanding by students, while underlining the character of teaching itself as a scholarly endeavor worthy of support and

reward. The CASTL Higher Education Program includes three components: the Carnegie Scholars program, the Campus program, and the Scholarly and Professional Societies program.

Click on the following or google *Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning* to see a variety of web-based products of outstanding professors who have studied and documented their teaching practice.

[http://gallery.carnegiefoundation.org/gallery\\_of\\_tl/examining\\_the\\_academic\\_seminar\\_through\\_the\\_scholarship\\_of\\_teaching\\_and\\_learning.html](http://gallery.carnegiefoundation.org/gallery_of_tl/examining_the_academic_seminar_through_the_scholarship_of_teaching_and_learning.html)

Click on any of the following categories to take you to resources for that area. We provide a few questions to guide your thinking about each category and some resources you can use.

## **CATEGORIES OF TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS**

- I. The Learning Environment**
- II. Course Content**
- III. Encouraging active student thinking about course content**
- IV. Responsiveness to students**
- V. Student assessment**

### **I. THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT (SOTE Items 4, 5, 8)**

#### **A. Thinking about the learning environment**

- Do you provide a safe place for students make errors, disagree with each other, and disagree with you? Think about how you respond when students answer incorrectly.
- Do you have ways to get to know your students – their names, what responsibilities they have beyond the classroom etc.?
- Do you provide ways for students to get to know each other, such as dividing them into learning teams of 4-5 people (maximum) and helping them learn a little about each other? Commuter students often feel no connection to other students or the teacher, leading them to quit before graduating.
- Do you provide a classroom environment that honors/values student diversity? Asking students to complete a survey that tells you how many classes they are taking, responsibilities outside of school, what they hope to get out of the course, what they find most difficult about school, what helps them learn, etc. sends the message that you are concerned about them.
- Do you discuss norms for class behavior, participation at the beginning of each semester. Discussing use of cell phones, private conversations, showing up on time, etc. and coming to mutual agreement of how the class will function, helps get everyone on the same page.

#### **B. Resources related to the learning environment**

Go to: [http://trace.uwaterloo.ca/teaching\\_resources/index.html](http://trace.uwaterloo.ca/teaching_resources/index.html). Click on CTE Teaching Tips. Under Getting Started, click on [Motivating students: Creating an inspiring environment \[pdf\]](#)

## II. COURSE CONTENT/RELEVANCE (SOTE Items 1, 2)

### A. Thinking about course content

- What do you do at your first class session to get students excited about the course content?
- Do you find a way to make explicit the relevance of your course content to your students' lives?
- Do you share with students how you are thinking about the course content and why the course is structured the way it is?

### B. Resources related to course content

Bain, K. (2004). *What the best college teachers do*. Boston, Mass: Harvard University Press.

“The Promising Syllabus” by James M. Lang  
from [The Chronicle of Higher Education](#) Monday, August 28, 2006  
<http://chronicle.com/jobs/news/2006/08/2006082801c/careers.html>.

## III. HELPING STUDENTS THINK (SOTE Items 3, 9, 11)

### A. Thinking about helping students think

- To help students think, you want to get them actively engaged during class session. What strategies do you use to get students actively involved during class?
- People learn when they have the opportunity to talk about what they are learning. What opportunities do you provide in class for students to talk to each other briefly in pairs or groups of no more than 4 about the content being presented. Talking and responding to one another's ideas helps them make sense of the content and reflect on whether they are really understanding the ideas presented.
- You can also support student thinking by providing opportunities for them to write about what they are learning, its connections to other content or the real world. This kind of writing is informal. It may or may not be turned in and is usually done quickly – in five minutes or less. When you collect the writing, you can get a quick sense of whether or not students are understanding the material (hence connecting to student assessment). You don't need to grade these – just let students know that you are looking for understanding.

**B. Resources for encouraging active student involvement with course content**

Brookfield, S. D., and Preskill, S. (2005). *Discussion as a Way of Teaching: Tools and Techniques for Democratic Classrooms*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass Higher and Adult Education Series.

*This book is another very helpful resource for encouraging active student engagement. Topics include: How discussion helps enliven classroom learning, preparing for discussion, getting discussions started, keeping discussions going through questions, listening, and responding, keeping discussion going through creative grouping, discussions in culturally diverse classrooms and across gender differences, and creating conditions for online discussion.*

[Raising Metacognitive Awareness Increases Student Responsibility for Learning Process](http://www.cfkeep.org/html/snapshot.php?id=3091717849571)

<http://www.cfkeep.org/html/snapshot.php?id=3091717849571>

TRACE Tips, Active Learning Strategies:

[cte.uwaterloo.ca/teaching...tips/.../active\\_learning\\_activities.pdf.pdf](http://cte.uwaterloo.ca/teaching...tips/.../active_learning_activities.pdf.pdf)

Bain, K. (2004). *What the best college teachers do*. Boston, Mass: Harvard University Press.

[Resource for developing effective writing assignments](http://www.brandeis.edu/writingprogram/intensive/designing.html)

<http://www.brandeis.edu/writingprogram/intensive/designing.html>

**IV. RESPONSIVENESS TO STUDENTS (SOTE Items 6, 7)**

**A. Thinking about responsiveness to students**

- Are you routinely available to students during office hours?
- Do you invite students who you see struggling in class, to your office for individual discussion?
- Do you leave time either just before or just after class to respond to individual student questions.
- Do you gather data during the semester on how students are responding to the class? Asking students to do either weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, or mid-semester assessment of how things are going in the class gives you a heads up on issues that you may need to address. When you ask for feedback, use questions that give you the kind of information you are looking for. Also, give students a summary of what you learned from their feedback and how you will respond to it.

**B. Resources for ideas on how to be responsive**

Bain, K. (2004). *What the best college teachers do*. Boston, Mass: Harvard University Press.

[TRACE Tips, Effectively communicating content tasks  
Giving and receiving effective feedback \[pdf\]](http://tls.vu.edu.au/learning_and_teaching/guidelines/VU12/Receiving%20and%20Giving%20Effective%20Feedback%20VU12.pdf)

[http://tls.vu.edu.au/learning\\_and\\_teaching/guidelines/VU12/Receiving%20and%20Giving%20Effective%20Feedback%20VU12.pdf](http://tls.vu.edu.au/learning_and_teaching/guidelines/VU12/Receiving%20and%20Giving%20Effective%20Feedback%20VU12.pdf)

## V. GRADING/ FEEDBACK (SOTE Items 10, 12)

### A. **Thinking about assessment practices**

Do your assessments help students apply what they have learned?

Do you provide models of what excellent and poor work products look like? Giving students the opportunity to examine sample work products and analyze them for strengths and weaknesses is a learning experience and usually leads to higher quality products.

Do you provide a rubric so that students are clear about what you are looking for in their work?

Do you provide ways for students to do self-assessment. Consider giving them a pre-assessment at the first class, keeping that assessment for them and then having them do a post-assessment at the end of the course and compare the two products, helps them see what they have learned.

### B. **Resources related to student assessment**

Rubistar.com

Bain, K. (2004). *What the best college teachers do*. Boston, Mass: Harvard University Press.

See TRACE TIPS Low Stakes writing assignments at:

[pages.cms.k12.nc.us/gems/bfghs/lowstakeswritingassignments.pdf](http://pages.cms.k12.nc.us/gems/bfghs/lowstakeswritingassignments.pdf)

[TRACE Tips, Methods for Assessing Group Work](http://www.docstoc.com/docs/3671071/TRACE-Tips-Teamwork-Skills-Being-an-Effective-Group-Member-MC)

<http://www.docstoc.com/docs/3671071/TRACE-Tips-Teamwork-Skills-Being-an-Effective-Group-Member-MC>

[Learner Centered Assessment](http://www.okanagan.bc.ca/Designing_Our_Future/Learner_Centred_Exc)

[http://www.okanagan.bc.ca/Designing\\_Our\\_Future/Learner\\_Centred\\_Exc  
ellence\\_Project/Learner\\_Centred\\_Assessment.html](http://www.okanagan.bc.ca/Designing_Our_Future/Learner_Centred_Exc)