

# FACULTY FOCUS

Spring 2001, Volume 10, Issue 2

*The Teaching Learning Center of Borough of Manhattan Community College reflects the mission of the college to preserve academic excellence and extend educational opportunities to a diversified urban population. The center strives to improve the quality of teaching and learning by cultivating an institutional climate that strengthens and promotes professional excellence.*

*The Teaching Learning Center provides a forum for faculty to exchange ideas about teaching and learning, serves as a center for presentations, maintains a collection of educational resources, disseminates information through a newsletter, and provides a calendar of faculty development activities at the college.*



## AN OVERVIEW OF THE 2001 JOSEPH DOCTOR COLLOQUIUM

*By Angela Jervis, Co-Editor*

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This article is an overview of The 2001 Joseph Doctor Colloquium “On – line: In – line? Or Out of Line?” sponsored by the Faculty Development Committee which was held on Thursday, March 29, 2001 in Richard Harris Terrace at 3:00 – 5:00 p.m. The panelists were: **Cecelia McCall** – Contract Negotiating Team, PSC Secretary, Director of PSC Legislation Committee “Online with PSC”; **Joan Greenbaum** – Professor, Computer Information Systems, (La Guardia) Environmental Psychology, (Graduate Center)

“Designed for Learning Environments”; **Tony Tinker** – Professor, Accounting, (Baruch) Co-Editor, Critical Perspectives on Accounting & The Accounting Forum, “CUNY’s Dilemma: Cheap Labor vs. Universalizing Access via Low – Cost Educational Technologies”; **Magda Vasilov** - Professor & Coordinator, Visual & Performing Arts/Humanities, (Hostos) “(Re) Inventing Discussion in the Virtual Classroom.”

Joyce Harte, Co-Chair of the Faculty Development Committee, gave the opening remarks. The colloquium was held in the honor of the memory of Joseph Doctor, to celebrate his commitment to teaching and learning and his desire that teachers hone their craft, the art of teaching. The administration was acknowledged as being very involved with on line teaching.

President Antonio Pérez gave the welcome. He hopes to alleviate the misinterpretation in an environment that faculty are expected to do more or faculty are overburdened. On line faculty have an opportunity to integrate technology into their courses and

Enhance their teaching and enhance students' learning process to provide them with the best education possible.

**The goal is to provide a quality education for our students and enable our faculty to use the latest technology to reach students in and out of the classroom as they see fit.**

Faculty will make the best judgements working at a pace that is consistent with our students and facilities. The administration will provide compensation and technology support to achieve this goal. President Pérez con

gratulated the Joseph Doctor Colloquium Committee for having brought this discussion to the campus. He acknowledged the time and willingness of the participants for coming to our campus and welcomed everyone.

Professor Susan Price, Chair of the Program Committee thanked the Office of Academic Affairs, President Antonio Pérez, Senior Vice President Saddle Bragg, the Faculty Development Committee, the Media Center and members of the Program Committee. She also thanked Professor Bill Freidheim for his suggestions about members of the panelists. She then introduced the panelists.

***Prof. Cecelia McCall, English Department, Baruch College***

The consequences of educational technology are going to be as far-reaching and as revolutionary as when Guggenheim invented the printing press. The Internet can revolutionize the access to knowledge. What we think it is? How it is apprehended and our relationship to it.

A survey about distance learning courses offered by higher educational institutions conducted by the National Center of Educational Statistics showed who the on line students are in comparison to the students on campus: They are more

likely to be female, have some college experience and the completion rate is 69% as compared to 84% for the same students enrolled in our campus courses. On line students have a lower GPA, are less likely to be enrolled full-time and are more likely to be working full-time and more likely to have an associate degree.

Since 1999, under Sloan Foundation Grant, all senior colleges except York and Medgar Evers, the Graduate Center and some community colleges are participating in a synchronous learning infrastructure CUNY on line powered by Blackboard. 81 courses are listed this semester as part of this system. In the budget request for 2001 – 2002, the Chancellor is asking for \$2m to develop programs that would increase faculty participation from the current 10% to 40%.

The contract that we work under has one article #40 that discusses technology. The union's role is to ensure that the demands of the market place, the under funding of the university, management's need and desire to reduce and contained costs, the trustee's rapture over technology and their fiscal negligence do not drive the issues and lead to super exploitation of faculty and staff while at the same time allowing time and space to determine the rightful role of this medium in our classrooms. The negotiation team has to tread very carefully during this collective bargaining underway, for we are pioneers. But we must also achieve contractual protection for the conditions and terms of employment for the academic labor force and non-teaching support staff. For the intellectual property, we must maintain academic freedom.

The union understands that this is a perilous moment in the history of education and collective bargaining, but believes that the faculty must control the quality of the education offered through information technology, so students are well served. Research and the study of 600 contracts inform the union's position. PSC proposal strengthen the PSC policy that has been in effect during this period of experimentation: namely that faculty participation must be voluntary; that the local level determines reassigned time; compensation; enrollment limits; and work load issues; that copyrights and material generated by the faculty remain with the faculty unless it was material con-

tracted for at the time of the inception of the project; that campuses governance bodies participate in assessing distance learning projects; and that school based policy on governance and curriculum be followed in implementing distance learning projects.

The developing of the six contract proposals that the union has, was guided by very comprehensive definitions. The definitions and proposals are available on the union's Website. It is agreed that courses employing any of the information technology listed in the proposals shall originate in specific academic departments and divisions, and they shall not originate in administrative units without the consent of the appropriate academic department.

**The specific proposals addressed four issues: 1) The potential and insidious increase in work load . 2) additional compensation for this increase work 3) that faculty and staff maintain the right of ownership and control over intellectual work and 4)that faculty retain control of academic policies relating to educational technology.**

The union has discussed these demands with CUNY management. Management has dug in their heels on the intellectual property aspect of this and said that that was the policy already adopted by the board, so that it was not subject to negotiations.

**Prof. Joan Greenbaum, Computer Science Department, La Guardia Community College**

The three points that were made are: 1) Technology and distance learning or educational technology is not the wave of the future. 2) Rather than use the media hype about on line and distance learning courses, she preferred to call what we are doing " hybrid courses," that is in persons courses that are extended and enhanced using technology.

3) What should we as students and faculty be doing right now?

What are some suggestions and guidelines to get going? Some questions pertaining to curriculum development and higher education pedagogy are as follows: Do we want to put this course on line or not? How do we tell whether students are performing better? Those are binary questions that illicit answers of the good, bad, good, bad response. We should ask different types of questions; like why lecturing? Why are lectures still around? We experiment with hybrids like learning communities, colloquiums, collaborative based learning, inquiry based learning, and backing away from the lecture method. Included, as background material is the technology.

**How do we use the technology to support us? How does the technology become the support not the motor?**

If technology is the support and not the motor, how do we choose the software we want to run behind the screen? When faculty are designing their curriculum and building a course, one of the first things we think about is, what kinds of books are we going to ask the students to read; that is the same as software. We would no sooner teach a course by having somebody say to us "this is the textbook you have to use it." Never, because what is academic freedom about?

What can we as faculty do now? We have to get rid of some of the hype the media surround us with, like this is convenient, this is easy, this makes your life better. What can be done now? 1) Research shows us that any course offered on line does best for the students, when there is in person's components. For example, in Norway, Europe, students came together to know each other and the professor at the beginning, they then went out and study the course material on line, then they came back at the middle and at the end; so there was community building, inquiry based learning. 2) Develop policies through the faculty governance bodies about what percentage of or courses can be taken on line. Many private colleges have already begun to do so. Certainly it is

our right as faculty to decide degree requirements. Some colleges require that students take a certain number of credits in person before they can take on line courses. Some colleges have requirements that students must take 80% of their courses in person and only 20% on line. But it is really up to our faculty governance to decide and we should get busy thinking about that. 3) Those of us that are trying different technologies as support for our courses should get together, not so much as to talk about different technology but to talk about what we have learned and what didn't work. We could talk these things in our departments' curriculum committees. Very important, we have to think about the physical spaces that we are learning in. Classrooms should be designed for learning, where technology is there behind the screen, art design, and architectural designed to minimize the damage to the human body such as to the eye and hand. 4) Demand for ourselves and students ergonomically designed desks, chairs and rooms. 5) Take very seriously the union's demands on distance learning or educational technology i.e. we see the union contract as a floor to support us. The most critical demand is that we hold class size to what it is, even when part of it is extended on line. Because research and our experiences show us already that the amount of time we spent sitting in front of a computer answering e-mail and preparing things is extensive. It is a huge amount of time, and additional work, so we must hold class size down. In holding class size down, it is educationally sound but it plays against the cost accounting paradigm's ideal of management to get rid of us, get rid of bricks and mortar, throw it on line and forget about repairing the building.

### **Prof. Tony Tinker, Accounting Department, Baruch College**

An important issue to management and the union was CUNY's legacy of access or open access that focused on entry grades and requirements. This technology opens up another kind of opportunity for access for students throughout the New York area and beyond. It provides access for people who cannot get to the physical site or classroom

because they have responsibilities of home of various kinds, or for economic reasons.

**Anything that would bring down the cost of education and making it more available to more people is worth looking into.**

In the field of accounting, employers are looking for much more literate, well read, and well rounded students who can argue, write, and integrate ideas in a systematic way. Prof. Tinker showed a CUNY on line site where his students in two sections use. Over 70 –110 students are organized in project groups. Over the semester, each group undertakes three major essay assignments. Each essay assignment takes about four weeks. Students first make their submissions to the assignment individually. They then argue among themselves about the merit of each submission, and then the assigned group leaders make a preliminary draft on behalf of the group. They argue again and then there is a final submission by the group. Their grades depend on their individual submission, their capacity to argue and the final group submission. An example of a substantial essay was shown of what accounting students were able to accomplish on line.

This technology has new issues and problems. They are major conflicts of interest for the university in dealing with software producers, software manufacturers e.g. Blackboard. They have their own agenda. We need as a university to be intelligent and alert about those political questions, as we negotiate some contracts. We need to be alert about intra university conflicts that exist. There are serious labor issues within the university.

**How does one properly engage this technology in a supportive and productive manner?**

**Prof. Magda Vasillov, Visual & Performing Arts/Humanities Department, Hostos Community College**

It was an ambitious undertaking to put an art history course on line.

**Some of the personal concerns that Prof. Vasillov shared were 1) fear of separation from the lack of face to face contact 2) fear of losing control from not being in front of the classroom 3) very concern about the success of our students. What if this does not work?**

Blackboard is a useful environment within which to park our courses that works. Before a basic art history course was put on line, some of the questions that have to be answered are as follows: How do you structure your course? How would you conduct discussions during the course? How do you feel about not having a textbook? How would you use the exorbitant amount of information on the Web? How do you make it easy to navigate the Web?

**The responsibility you take on when you put a course on line is to make it explicit, make it comprehensible, make it simple, not fancy and make it workable.**

The responsibility you take on when you put a course on line is to make it explicit, make it comprehensible, make it simple, not fancy and make it workable.

Prof. Vasillov showed the homepage and we looked at the course information. You must plan an agenda and you must stick with it. You must show your students in writing what it is that they will be doing. You also put the syllabus on line.

You put the rubric for evaluation that includes the most important part of an on line course that is discussion and participation. Within course documents, you park mini lectures. Within these lectures are links that are given to students.

To put a course on line that you have been teaching, it takes about 150 hours a month. It takes about 6 hours a week on line. The startup is intensive. For each artist that is studied, there is an assignment page with links to Web resources. The MET Website, hot lines to art shows and all major links are found under external links. Assignments are drafted in Word then uploaded. They are received by the professor and returned to students. The students are as well prepared as we are. Sometimes it is a hard thing for a professor to stay out of a conversation. A subject under discussion was Al Greco's painting of Mary breast feeding Jesus. In response to the professor's question: Do you think it is appropriate to show this mother feeding her child? Prof. Vasillov showed the students spirited responses to this question. There were several other paintings that students had to comment on. All the students seemed to be enjoying the course. Each student has uploaded three written assignments. A mid-term essay is uploaded, then corrected by the professor which the students revise and send back. The final essay is comprehensive on a 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> century painting. Blackboard works well for an art history course.

A spirited question and answer period followed the presentations. Closing remarks and presentation of tokens of appreciation concluded the colloquium by Prof. Rachel Theilheimer, Co-Chair of the Faculty Development Committee.

## **OUR PIONEERS**

In this section we will read about the experiences of our very own faculty who are the first to teach an on line courses at BMCC.

## AN INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR RHEA PARSONS, SOCIAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT

By Ellwood Williams, Publications Committee

**Q:** *Why did you choose to teach an on line course?*

**A:** Over the past few years, I have seen several schools offer many distance learning classes and I wanted to learn how to develop and teach them. Soon after I was hired, I received a letter offering the opportunity to join BMCC Online so I signed up immediately.

**In addition to learning new computer skills and technology, would have learned how to teach in a new venue and would have to rethink how and what I teach.**

Being new to the college, joining BMCC Online would have been a good way to meet people in all disciplines.

**Q:** *What special skills do you think you have that have made you confident and willing to be one of the first professors to teach your course on line?*

**A:** I am determined and tenacious, even stubborn. When I don't understand something, I don't put it down until I do understand it. I love challenges and learning new things. But I have to say that the main thing that made me confident about teaching online was not any special skill but a special person, Professor Jane Paznik-Bondarin.

**When I first joined BMCC Online, I could barely work my e-mail and wondered what I had gotten myself Into! However, within three weeks, Jane had me writing HTML codes, downloading graphics creating hyperlinkis, and more.**

She was always there when I needed help. So when she asked if anyone could possibly have their class ready to run by the Spring 2001 semester rather than the proposed Fall 2001 semester, I knew that with her guidance I could do it. And I did.

**Q:** *What expectations did you have for this course before the semester started?*

**A:** Like most of the other professors in my training course, I was worried about how I would get my personality across to students over the computer and how I would get them to understand the material without "being there" to teach it to them. I was also concerned that the students wouldn't be able to keep up with the amount of work required and that they wouldn't communicate with each other in the discussions. I was also concerned with the time and attention this type of class would require.

**Q:** *How do your actual experiences compare to your expectations?*

**A:**

**I'm happy to say that most of my fears were unfounded.**

I wrote long, conversational lectures so that the online students were basically "hearing" the same things as the onsite students. So far the grades between the online and onsite classes are comparable. I actually think the on line students may understand some material on a deeper level since, unlike the on site students, they are forced to discuss it in their posts.

Since the class is available to them on a 24/7 basis, they don't have many problems keeping up with the work. As for their talking to each other, I actually had to limit the number of posts they could write because they were communicating so much, there were too many posts to read. They also communicate with each other outside of the class through e-mail or in the virtual student lounge. This level of communication and bonding between students is something I don't see in onsite classes. In regards to time, saying the course is time-consuming is an understatement. Even after "learning the ropes" and feeling at ease with this type of class, the time and work involved is not

equivalent to an onsite class; it is much more but the students make it worth the added effort.

**Q:** *What would you do differently if you were to teach this course for the second time?*

**A:** Now that I know what to expect, I can better schedule the lectures and assignments and stop trying to always match this class to the on site classes. Fortunately, we will be offering an orientation for the students so they don't have to spend the first two weeks of class learning how to navigate the software.

**Q:** *What suggestions do you have for future faculty who are thinking about teaching a course online?*

**A:** Do it! Developing the course is a lot of work but it's worth it. I have 4 pieces of advice that work for me: (1) While it may seem easier to give students outlines of course material than to write conversational lectures, I don't see how this would be any different than reading the text. Our job is to explain the material and to provide examples and applications in another voice. The students say that the lectures make the difference since they are essentially, transcripts of the lectures I give in class; (2) Give it a personal touch. Over the computer, it's easier to not get to know the students since there are no faces to see or recognize in the hallway. Every week, I send a few students a personal e-mail just to say hello and see how they are doing. Like students in onsite classes, they are often reluctant to approach the faculty when they have a problem. Students have told me that they feel it's more difficult to initiate an e-mail conversation about a problem than to come up to the professor after class so I feel the professor has to make the effort to stay in touch with each student;

**(3) make sure the students know from the beginning how much work is involved so when they complain later, we can remind them that they were fully informed about the requirements;**

and (4) keep it manageable for the students and for yourself. There is a feeling that without the limited class time you can fit more work in, especially since you never fall behind but you may find you need some catch-up time just like in onsite classes. Keep it enjoyable.

## **AN INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR JANE PAZNIK-BONDARIN, ENGLISH DEPARTMENT**

By Nidia Pulles-Linares, Publications Committee

**Q:** *Why did you choose to teach a course on line?*

**A:** I guess the temptation was “to boldly go....” This is the final frontier of my teaching career. After thirty years, it's challenging, fun, exhausting, and wildly engaging to re-think my teaching. I have had a good “history” with using computers with students, from the time I took a laconic class downstairs and taught them to use e-mail (very difficult at the time, before Windows) so they could correspond with students in a composition class in Oregon (taught by Stacey Donohue, once our colleague). They became so excited about e-mail that the excitement spread into every area of the course.

**Writing became more important because there was an immediate audience, and the students began to care about what they said and how they said it.**

And that spread into the care they took with their papers, too. What I am doing now is the outgrowth of that early experience.

**Q:** What special skills do you think you have that have made you confident and willing to be one of the first professors to teach your course on line?

**A:** Confident and willing are two different things. Willing? Sure. Confident? Rhea Parsons and I sat up in terror the first night we opened up our classes for students. We kept sending e-mails to each other asking if students had written anything,

and we in a panic! I felt like somebody giving a party who is watching the clock and worrying that no one will show up. Of course, the other side of this is that I will try most anything new in a classroom (even a cyber classroom) if it seems like it will further teaching and learning. Thank God bungee jumping does not appear to have educational value!

I never thought I'd go in this direction. I was thrilled to work with Title III when I returned from my sabbatical, and I am devoted to the idea of increasing technology through Web-enhanced classes. I also like the idea of "hybrid" classes that meet part online and part in a classroom. I LOVE being in a classroom. I love the transaction between me and the students. I love to see the lights go on in a student's eyes. I like to reach out and touch someone's shoulder or smile into a face. And I love it when a student makes me think of something that sends me off on some tangent, and then the students get into it, and there's this incredible synergy in the room. I think this is one of the most important parts of our work, an experience that students may not have had before they come to us. So many of them tell me that teachers before they came to BMCC never made them feel like intellectuals, and I see that as being just as important if not more important than imparting subject matter. Mainly, this is done face-to-face, and mainly the students will live and need to learn to operate in a face-to-face world. I like to think the students get practice in my classes operating as intellectuals in group situations, and that this will stand them in good stead in their futures. Hard to believe, with attitudes like that, that I'd end up a cyber geek, but I think the online world is also part of the future, and it's well to be able to operate as an intellect there, too, so I am willing to go there. Never let it be said I won't go anywhere for a good class!

*Q: What expectations did you have for this course before the semester started?*

*A: I am not sure what I expected. I was SO scared, I think I was too numb for expectations. All that talking and planning, and then it was just...there.*

*Q: How do your actual experiences compare to your expectations?*

I found some things I wasn't expecting: The students are the same, yet different from the on-site students. To some extent, the people who chose to take the course are a self-selecting, more computer savvy group, and there is a critical mass of good writers, probably more than I get in an English III on-site. On the other hand, there are a few people who are clueless about the computer and need substantial help with their writing. I am surprised by the size of the first group, and I am surprised that the second group showed up at all. Speaking of which: I am totally mystified that ten people who registered for the course never logged on. This is larger than the number of "no shows" we get on-site. The attrition rate, after you factor out the students who never logged on, is pretty much the same as an on-site class and lower than people led me to believe I'd have in a cyber course (across the country, the attrition rate is about 50%). Some of the reasons are different, though. I think some students registered for this course "on top of" a full program, figuring that if they didn't have to sit in class, the course would be "easy." Big mistake. Big mistake. They didn't expect a full-fledged, three-credit English elective. And they don't equate the time they spend on the discussion thread with the time they would have spent in class. Of course, in class, they might have been able to sleep, but on lline, they have to write. They were not necessarily prepared for the intensity of the interaction. Oh...that brings me to another difference. On line students feel much more able to complain and moan than on-site students. Don't get me wrong. They are unfailingly polite, although on line interactions tend to be a little more crisp (this is something I have to watch in myself, in and out of class), and some time is spent apologizing for what may have been misunderstood. But they find it much easier to complain about their workload in writing than they would face-to-face.

*Q: What would you do differently if you were to teach this course for the second time?*

*A: I'd like the students to have a better idea of what they are getting into, be able to see a recycled course or take part in a specially set up*

course, although I am not sure if this will make a difference.

**I'd like to have pictures of all the students on the Web site so we can see to whom we are speaking.**

Website so we can all see to whom we are speaking. Most important, I'd will take a more active role in the discussion earlier on in the semester. I was being so careful not to be intrusive and let the students find their own voice in discussion that I think I bent over too far backwards.

*Q: What suggestions do you have for future faculty who are thinking about teaching a course on line?*

*A:* You really have to want to do this, and it isn't for everyone. It's hard work, and one is never compensated for the amount of time it takes to prepare the course and to offer it. And unless you want to re-think everything you've ever thought about your teaching, this is probably not something you want to do. That having been said, it's also great fun, exhilarating, liberating. It's the "late frontier," or at least the last one we can see at this moment. Surely, for the younger faculty, there will be one I can't even conceive of, much like I would never have conceived of this thirty years ago.

**Suggestions: Don't think too hard. Just do it. Make the leap. Don't worry too much about the technology. It's not all that hard to learn, and there are plenty of people to help. It's about the teaching, the pedagogy, about reaching students in new ways and hearing from them in new ways.**

## From the Directors

Our two year tenure as Co-Directors of BMCC's Teaching Learning Center has come to an end, but not without the great joy of being invited by our Advisory Board to continue through 2003. Because of our current and future academic projects and our firm belief that opportunities for leadership should be widely shared, we have declined this invitation. We look forward to the new directorship, knowing our own vision will be not just continued but improved.

Although we will continue to support the TLC both formally and informally, we already miss our lively tenure, the fruitful exchange of ideas, the satisfaction of new initiatives in action, and the closeness of newfound friendships. It has been our privilege to serve the college as Co-Directors of The Teaching Learning Center for the past two years, and we truly appreciate the work of our dedicated Advisory Board members, volunteers and department liaisons. We also want to thank President Antonio Pérez, Senior Vice President Sadie Bragg, Dean Janis Jones and Dean Michael Gillespie for their support, guidance and funding of the TLC.

Now it is time to pass the torch and wish the new TLC leaders and participants a productive 2001-2003 tenure. It gives us great pleasure, as our final responsibility, to welcome:

Director: Joyce Harte, English

Adjunct Assistant Director: Angela Romeo Mollo, English

Advisory Board Members: Nkechi Agwu, Math; Hafiz Bagbhan, Dev. Skills; Sandra Blake-Neis, Business Mgt.; Sherry Engle, Speech; Yakov Genis, CIS; Alfie Gill, Dev. Skills; Norma Katz, Nursing; Caren Leslie, Soc. Sc; Jackie Myrie, Nursing; Caroline Pari, English; Nidia Pulles Linares, Mod. Lang.; Precious Sellars Mulherne, Counseling; Gigi Weisenfeld, Soc. Sc.

Alternates: Alberta Grossman, Dev. Skills; Manawendra Roy, CIS.

Volunteers: Rhea Parsons, Social Science; Denise Rosen Brigati, Nursing; Margie White, Nursing.

Liaisons: Eda Rosario, Nursing, Yong Wei, Dev. Skills.

Additional volunteers and department liaisons are welcome to join the TLC in the Fall. Thanks and “*hasta la vista*”!