Greetings Faculty! We hope you enjoy this issue of Faculty Speaks. In this issue we included articles on technology and mentoring along with other pieces of information that we believe are relevant to our work.

As I reflect on the great strides we faculty have made in trying to meet the needs of our “tech savvy” students, I cannot help but think about the ways in which technology has impacted the communication climate. While it certainly helps to not have to walk across campus to discuss something, or even pick up our phones to do so, it is essential that we maintain civility in all public discourse. This includes emails that we address to all faculty - university wide. We spent some time discussing collegiality at our opening faculty meeting and this goes hand-in-hand with civility. If we are civil in all of our communication with colleagues, whatever the mode, we are stronger as a faculty body. We are also more credible when we present a united front to the administration and others. As we strive to be effective role models for our students, I hope that we can continue to discuss, debate and disagree, with civility and respect for each other; thereby creating a vibrant and harmonious communication climate.

– DR. NINA SAHA GUPTA
Having served as the Faculty Senate Assistant for 6 months, I can make the following statement with gusto: Texas Southern University has a working Faculty Senate. Nary a day goes by where a faculty member seeking assistance doesn't find the information, or the representation, that they seek.

I continue to relish the fervor with which your Senators embody their positions, while at the same time effectively fulfilling their duties to their students, colleagues, and respective fields. It is an interesting place to be... Surrounded by so much zealousness for the University they serve, and the faculty they serve within it.

However, I have also noticed something else. With so much frenetic energy it can be easy, amidst the goings on of everyday life, to forget to take notice of everything around you; namely, your Faculty Senate Office.

I invite you to take one of those moments and visit your Faculty Senate Office. Say Hi, grab a cookie, check your email, and ask questions.

As you know, we're here to serve, and sometimes that's as simple as giving you a steaming cup of French Roast exactly when you need it.

Charlene James
Assistant to The Faculty Senate
Assistant Editor, Faculty Speaks
MENTORING. Arguably more than 40% of our job as faculty, how can we do it better?

“From the Garden to the Plate” Human Services and Consumer Sciences Community Garden and its impact on the local community

By: Dr. Selina Ahmed

Texas Southern University’s Department of Human Services and Consumer Sciences established its Annual Childhood Obesity conference in 2004, under the leadership of Dr. Selina Ahmed, Associate Professor of Food and Nutrition. The purpose of the conference was to create community friendly health and nutrition policies at the local, state, and national levels for the well-being of families from all socio-economic backgrounds. The conference also included workshops and training for parents on promoting healthy eating habits among children and parents.

I believe that in order to create awareness about healthy food choice, you have to give the community members hands on experiences and let them get involved growing their own produce. I insisted that my Foods and Nutrition/Dietetic students involve themselves through the community nutrition course. First, my students and I established the community supported Agriculture (CSA) Garden in 2006, with Urban Harvest in Alabama Garden partnering with Mr. J.D. Green. It was a life changing experience for my students and fellow colleagues. At TSU, I was encouraged to establish a garden which is located at TSU, adjacent to the Lane building. The children from the TSU/HISD charter school, Head Start, and W.R. Banks, including all faculty members of HSCS/staff and students were involved. Indeed, it did take a whole village to start and maintain the garden over the past years with the assistance from TSU land crews, who were a tremendous help. The HSCS department greatly appreciated their time.

Over the years, students from (FN, Dietetics, CFDV, FCS) provided numerous nutrition education and health tips to the children of the surrounding community. For instance, children were taught how to grow their own carrot garden and the importance of different varieties of carrots as a vegetable in their daily diet. In addition, faculty and students of HSCS provided different workshops on low sodium diet, importance of a balanced diet and healthy snacks to the students, parents, children and the community members at large. The children took fresh produce from the garden to their homes, and made salad for their parents. With children advocating for it, a clear message about healthy lifestyle and healthy food choice was taken and established in their homes. The children were instrumental in educating their parents about the importance of healthy eating, learning how to make healthy choices with fresh produce and the significance of the new food guide pyramid, “MyPlate.” The recipients of the fresh produce from the garden include TSU faculty, staff, and parents from Cuney Homes.

The garden has had tremendous impact on the HSCS students by giving them opportunities to provide nutrition education to these small children and their parents. When they came to plant and harvest the garden, the students learned about the ways that the community garden could be used as an educational tool. They learned that this community garden can help to promote a healthy lifestyle for parents, children, and the surrounding community members who are in desperate need of nutrition education and a supply of fresh produce to combat childhood obesity and develop a healthier lifestyle.

The greatest satisfaction to my students and fellow colleagues is when the children from the above mentioned schools see them and relate “how they have improved in their food selection for daily consumption,” and “how they have begun to consume fresh fruits and vegetables.” They take pride in sharing that they learn this important and necessary message from the food demonstrations provided by Dr. Ahmed’s (continued)
students during the HSCS Annual Childhood Obesity Conference.

The community we are serving have always been hesitant to open up about their needs, as well as their health issues to anyone, from public service agencies to medical professionals; nor do they like the idea of becoming a statistical number in a research project. These are real people with real needs; they need genuine guidance about the total health and well-being for their families, starting from early childhood. One-on-one counseling about their health issues as it relates to healthy food choice, critical decisions about food labels and food preparation are some of the critical issues for them. They are getting real nutrition education from the community garden and the Annual Childhood Obesity Conference with the help of our students, staff, and faculty. I firmly believe that “prevention is better than cure”.

The last ten years have been challenging trying to maintain the garden without state or federal funding. We have received great support from local sponsors such as H.E.B, Whole Foods Market, Chick-fil-A, and TSU faculty, staff, and students, as well as friends and relatives. In 2013 my students and I received an award for the garden from Urban Harvest. All of these supporters encouraged our initiative to reduce the health disparity in this neighboring community. However, we understand that our efforts are just a small step and a lot more needs to be done to educate the entire community.

We know firsthand the need for the community garden because there are times when we have returned from weekends or holiday breaks to the garden and were astonished to realize that our fruits and vegetables were gone. This realization saddened us, but we planted more fresh produce to meet the needs of the community. Every time I see that the produce is gone, I close my eyes and I pray for my community members by thinking that “somebody is eating healthy somewhere” That has kept us going over the years. Now, we are ready for spring gardening.

March is National Nutrition Month and “WE HAVE TO BE READY.”

Both the Annual conference and the community garden have the same goal and model, “Health is Wealth”
Numerous studies have shown that involving undergraduate students in research activities improves retention and graduation rates, and eases transition to graduate programs. However, this endeavor is often fraught with difficulties and challenges. Some of these challenges are that undergraduate students often lack the scholastic abilities and preparation that enable them to undertake rigorous research. On the other hand, faculty overloaded with numerous class preparations and service assignments find it hard to fit research with undergraduates in their busy schedules.

REU programs and Summer Research opportunities usually represent the most common ways for engaging undergraduate students in research. These programs are between eight (8) to ten (10) weeks long and require the student to be fully engaged in the experience. They usually happen outside of the undergraduate student’s home university. They provide an environment in which the student is immersed in research activities such as seminars, visits to research laboratories, technical presentations. These activities aim at building the student’s academic background and strengthen their technical skills. Additionally, these programs also include social activities that strengthen the ties amongst participants and between undergraduate students and faculty or graduate students mentors. The purpose of both social and academic activities is to instill in the student an aptitude and love for research and a sense of belonging to a “community of scholars”.

When a lone faculty in a teaching university engages undergraduate students in research either during the academic year or in summer, they do not benefit from the support system that REU programs provide and it is often left up to the faculty to provide a “semblance” of a research environment using their limited resources. In order to achieve a research experience that is successful and productive to both student and faculty, it is often necessary to follow some basic rules that I have learnt from my own experience and that have also been documented in various publications:

Selecting committed students: Often the lure of a stipend drives many students to apply for a research experience without being fully aware of its attending responsibilities. Furthermore, if the faculty has a grant in which undergraduate research has been budgeted, they usually have to present the results of the research undertaken and it may jeopardize the continuation of their funding if the results are not positive. Consequently, the onus is on the faculty to be selective about whom to engage. If possible, faculty should teach a sophomore or a junior course so as to “discover” budding researchers in their course. They should also look for performance beyond the required coursework and signs that the student has gone the extra mile. The faculty should discuss with the student their favorite course, their ideal job and readiness to work with others so as to assess their interests and level of maturity.

Planning and Managing for a Successful Undergraduate Research Project:

Budget Planning: During the writing of the proposal, the faculty should include in their budget a line item for hiring at least two
undergraduate students. The hourly salary offered should be close to the hourly rate of entry level professionals in their field. The students’ perception that they are being used as “cheap labor” can impact their commitment and be detrimental to the success of the project.

Setting up expectations: It is important that the faculty mentor explains to the students his or her expectations in terms of their event attendance, hours worked, deadlines and deliverables.

Teaching Research: The faculty should expect that undergraduate students are not versed in research techniques such as reviewing professional papers, working independently, time management, presenting results and writing reports. These skills are very important for a student to get ahead in their professional life. The faculty mentor should facilitate the acquisition of these skills by visiting the library, organizing workshops on time management, applying relevant project management methods and so on.

Team Building, Shared Responsibility and Ownership: The faculty mentor should have their student (s) attend meetings in which technical decisions about their project are made. They should be properly introduced and encouraged to observe the interactions between professionals, how projects are defined/refined, goals are set and even budgetary issues are discussed. Additionally, the faculty mentor needs to divide the project into discrete phases and set up deadlines for completing various tasks. Weekly face to face group meetings should be planned with the purpose of establishing strong ties among the group and having everyone actively participate in selecting tools and approaches for the project and discussing progress or other relevant issues.

Documenting work: The faculty mentor should require that progress reports be submitted regularly (weekly) by all team members, including themselves. These reports help assess the progress of the project and see where it is lagging behind and thereby remedy the situation. Later, these reports can be used as a basis for writing the final project report.

In conclusion, I present you with 10 rules for successfully conducting undergraduate research:

1. Select good responsible students and have them work in groups.
2. Free up yourself for mentoring; it takes up a lot of time.
3. Involve students in project design and tool selection.
4. Minimize frustration by dividing the work into discrete units.
5. Establish strict planning (but be flexible).
6. Require weekly reports and write them yourself.
7. Include social events.
8. Celebrate the small achievements.
9. List your undergraduate students as authors if your work gets published.
10. Cash works better than credit.
Students' Technology Use and Implication in Higher Education

By: Dr. Holim Song

Introduction

Technology has become a critical component of teaching and learning in college campuses. Colleges and universities are facing increasing demand of technology use from students who have grown up with technology. Technology is important for these students in terms of how they access course materials and how instructors use technology to engage them in the learning process. It is important to students that their instructors know how to use technology to facilitate and support learning. Despite technology being used in the classroom and huge investment in technology being made, students’ perception and behavior toward technology use in their campus classroom has remained questionable. With rising expectations of effective use of technology in classroom teachings, it is important for instructors to know students’ technology-related opinions and behaviors so that instructors know the types of technology that students want them to use.

Since 2004, ECAR (Educause Center for Analysis and Research) has investigated technology use and technology-related perceptions among college students. The findings not only provide students’ opinion regarding technology use on the campus but also provide insight and idea on how instructors need to develop their instruction in order to meet student needs, and to engage students into their classroom. The following recommendations are based on 2012 and 2013 survey responses from more than 100,000 students around the world.

Students prefer blended learning environment

Students still prefer blended learning environments. The majority of students (70% in 2012, 84% in 2013) said they learn most in the blended learning environment. Blended learning environments include the traditional face-to-face learning and the online learning environment. Blended learning is gaining popularity in colleges and universities. Students in this learning environment are satisfied with the time flexibility, improved learning outcomes, and increased engagement with instructors. In a blended learning environment, interaction between students and the instructor and among students, are contributing factors that increase student and instructor satisfaction. Studies indicate that students should be ready to participate in blended learning with regard to time management skills, but further research is needed on how colleges and universities prepare students to meet the specific requirements for participation in blended courses. Instructors require preparation for teaching their blended courses, but they also face challenges including inadequate time for course development, insufficient resources, and lack of time and resources to keep up with the constant changes in technology.

Students expect their instructors to engage them using technology in the learning process

Students show positive attitudes about their instructors who use some types of technology to engage and aid them in their (continued)
understanding of course materials and ideas. Engaging students in the learning environment is considered a key component of teaching and learning. One of the most effective engagement strategies is prompt feedback. Feedback that stimulates higher-level thinking can help increase student engagement. Further, students are more likely to engage in asynchronous online discussions, especially when their instructor addresses them by name in responding to their discussion messages. Critical feedback tends to have a positive impact on student engagement. Below are some strategies to engage students in online discussions:

- Specify times for students to read and respond to the discussion board posts.
- Make regular announcements and provide news and information relating to discussion topics.
- Provide FAQ section.
- Spend some time during the first week assisting students’ access to the online discussion board.

Students want their instructors to use free and available course content, simulation or educational game-based learning, and course management systems

Free resources are transforming higher education. One of open educational resources is OpenCourseWare Consortium which provides educational materials such as syllabi, academic content, lectures, presentation, notes and simulation, and educational games developed by educators. Students prefer that their instructors use more open educational resources. Students also want their instructors to use course management system (CMS). Many colleges and universities are providing course management system where instructors can post their class material, record grades, and allow synchronous and asynchronous communication among course participants. CMS can be effective with blended learning systems as well if instructors engage students in their learning and increase interaction. In order for instructors to engage students more effectively using CMS, instructional strategies for course management system is required skill for instructors. Additionally, Institutions have to provide instructors with support, encouragement, and even incentives to put more course materials online. Instructors need to seek opportunities to provide students with freely available course content, e-books, simulations and educational games, and e-portfolios.

Students use their mobile devices to access their course material

Almost every student brings their portable devices and uses them to access their course material. Faculty have to create a strategy for incorporating mobile device use into their classrooms, and minimize technical barriers that prohibit students from using their mobile devices while on campus. Instructors also have to model or educate their students about the ways that mobile devices and smartphones can be used as a learning tool.

Students understand the value of technology but need technology training and skill

Technological proficiency is vital to students’ success in the digital world. It is very important for students to be better trained and skilled at using technologies to learn academic content. Students expect their instructors to train them to effectively use the technology required for coursework (e.g., use of the CMS, hardware, and productivity software). They want opportunities to become more effective with practical, real world technology that is critical for success in both academia and the workplace.
Teaching Digital Identity
February 10, 2014

By
Becca Ramspott

Whether we call it protesting, mudslinging, or “digital hate,” as Chancellor Phyllis Wise did in her blog post addressing University of Illinois’ Twitter incident, there is nothing new about very public, incendiary criticism occurring online — or in person. Racist and derogatory slurs and innuendos happen every day, in our college and university student centers, in our residence halls, out on the field at games. And numerous colleges and universities have felt the wrath of social media outrage in response to a decision, changes in leadership, and other developments.

As those of us in higher education know all too well, we lack the time, staff and resources to police our students on the Internet through disciplinary action. It’s simply not feasible or reasonable, nor is it conducive to free speech.

Our colleges and universities need to take a proactive stance and realize that digital identity development — something that thought leaders such as Eric Stoller have highlighted as part of the conversation defining student affairs and higher education — can and should be a part of our institutional curriculums. This is more than just a major in social media that focuses on marketing skills, or the occasional guest speaker at a student event. This goes beyond our coaches handing out guidelines to athletes.

This is student affairs and academic leadership making a commitment to offer educational outreach and resources to students campus-wide, ideally through first-year courses, so that all freshmen benefit. Colleges are increasingly offering classes that cover important topics like financial literacy, as part of their orientation classes for incoming students. What if more colleges and universities devoted some orientation class time to digital identity topics such as personal branding, where students were required to critically examine case studies of individuals (companies, politicians, actors, etc.) who suffered the consequences of doing something awful online? Such an exercise would surely help them realize their mistakes live on in infamy online.

Knowing how to unplug and be present and in the moment is another area where first-year students would benefit from receiving ideas and resources to discuss and develop with one another. Basic digital literacy skills, such as knowing the professional benefits of writing emails so that they don’t come across as casual, flippant texts to friends, would be worth sharing in a first-year course experience for all incoming students.

Career services also has a part to play in providing regular, ongoing guidance and resources so students can market their ideas, potential and leadership online, not just their senior years, but right from the beginning, as part of their experiences in pursuing internships, degrees and ultimately, jobs. If you talk to your average college students, surprisingly, some of them think LinkedIn is something that their parents use, not something they should be tapping into to network and explore jobs and internship options. If career services counselors started working with them early on to develop LinkedIn profiles, imagine how much easier it might be for students to research great internships and connect with potential employers, alumni and mentors throughout their time in college.

The pressure is on for higher education to get with the program and be more relevant to what students need to become gainfully employed after college. How far into the future will these hateful tweets haunt University of Illinois students once they start looking for jobs? My guess is forever. How will these students, many of whom have grown up in a highly digitized world where communication is immediate and readily shared

(continued)
through numerous technologies, realize their potential as online ambassadors without some sort of educational outreach?

The other glaring part of the weird, uncertain, ever-changing journey of social media is that these problems — which range from online gaffes and faux pas to blatant racism and sexism — are not just limited to our students. Our faculty and staff are struggling with digital engagement and how to share their thoughts and ideas online in ways that don’t damage their reputations and that of our colleges and universities. There are plenty of examples of educators being reprimanded or even fired because of poor behavior on social media. Perhaps that’s why higher education has been slow to address the need for digital identity development. Many of us employed at our institutions are grappling with the best way to use social media, at a time when technology is transforming our industry. We’ve yet to really tap into a universal, comprehensive way to address this issue at most of our colleges and universities. To bring things full circle and make digital identity development fully integrated into higher education, we need to provide more training for faculty and staff, so they have a better understanding of why digital identity matters. That’s got to be part of the mix.

As Chancellor Wise wrote, “we still have work to do” in response to the University of Illinois incident. And that work must go beyond one-time disciplinary actions to address something larger, something that is fundamentally lacking at most of our institutions: providing digital identity development educational outreach and support to our campus communities, across the board.