Rethinking Thinking: Fall Book Discussion of *Make It Stick*

As I read *Make It Stick: The Science of Successful Learning* an image from Robin Williams’ *Dead Poets Society* kept flashing through my head: cut to the white-haired instructor who paces in front of a chalk board scribbled with Latin conjugation. A bust of Augustus Caesar, slightly out of focus, seems to watch as the instructor recites, “Agricola, agricolae, agricolarum” on through the conjugation. And then, swinging a pointer through the air, he intones, “again, please!” This, in the eyes of the filmmaker, is traditional learning.

According to Paul Brown and colleagues, authors of *Make It Stick*, it is a lesson we’ve learned well. Need to memorize a number? Repeat it again and again. Want to learn a skill? Practice, practice, practice. Studying for that test? Review the text, read over your notes, and repeat. But, as Brown says in his fascinating study of current cognitive research, “it turns out that much of what we’ve been doing as teachers and students isn’t serving us well. . . . People commonly believe that if you expose yourself to something enough times . . . you can burn it into memory. Not so.” *Make It Stick* not only dispels longstanding myths about the way we learn, but also examines how we can revise our classroom strategies to maximize learning potential.

The Center for Faculty Excellence is pleased to be able to present new faculty with a copy of this book. We also have copies available on a first-come, first-serve basis for existing faculty who are interested (email: facdev@unomaha.edu). We hope you’ll take time to read over the book and join us for a faculty appreciation lunch and a discussion on October 5 from 11:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. in Roskens Hall, Room 214.
The Delicate Balance

As college teachers, we find ourselves in the sometimes difficult, sometimes exciting position of assisting students through life challenges. New students, often far from home, no longer have the immediate contact with and advice from the family, friends, and community members who have guided them for much of their lives. Because we see them routinely, because, as part of the nature of this profession, we advise them, and because we are integral to a crucial period of intellectual, emotional, and philosophical growth in their lives, we become mentors to them.

But what is a mentor? Do we dispense knowledge? Provide guidance? Offer solutions? And when are we beyond our abilities to help? Filmmaker Stephen Spielberg said, “the delicate balance of mentoring someone is not creating them in your own image, but giving them the opportunity to create themselves.” Maybe then we, as mentors, are facilitators: giving what we can of our own experiences; providing avenues in areas where we cannot help; encouraging growth and independence.

The Center for Faculty Excellence would like to help you better understand the mentoring process and your role within it. This fall we will offer a three-part series on mentoring students: Part I: Behind Glazed Eyes: How to Motivate the Struggling or Disengaged Student; Part II: Burning Bright: Mentoring High Achieving Students In and Out of the Classroom; and Part III: Beyond the Window: How We Can Mentor, Help, and Encourage Students Outside the Classroom. These events will be held in September, October and November, so check our calendar for the dates and times and join us in this discussion of what we can do to best facilitate student growth.

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Calendar of Events: August and September

August 17: New Faculty Orientation, 8:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. (CEC)
Graduate Assistant Orientation, 9:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. (Mammel Hall)

August 19: Adjunct Faculty Orientation Session 1, 4:45-8:00 p.m. (Roskens Hall)
August 20: Adjunct Faculty Orientation Session 2, 4:45-8:00 p.m. (Roskens Hall)

September 8: RPT Roundup, 10:00-11:00 a.m. (CEC)

September 10: Joint Open House with TTC/API, 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. (Kayser Hall 514)
TABS Interest Meeting, 1:00-2:00 p.m. (Kayser Hall 538)

September 14: Introduction to Blackboard Workshop, 1:45-3:15 p.m. (Kayser Hall 543)

September 15: Digital Drop-In, 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. (Criss Library, Room 112)

September 22: Behind Glazed Eyes: Mentoring the Struggling or Disengaged Student, 2:30-3:30 p.m. (Criss Library Faculty Study Area)

September 23: Digital Drop-In, 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. (PKI, Room 158)

September 24: Digital Drop-In, 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. (CPACS, Room 132D)
The Center for Faculty Excellence would like to congratulate the recipients of the 2014-2015 Alumni Outstanding Teaching Award. Established in 1997, the UNO Alumni Association honors, each year, faculty who have been recognized for their excellence in the classroom. This year’s winners received a plaque and a $1,000 award in April at the Faculty Honors Convocation.

Robert Blair  
Public Administration

Paul Landow  
Political Science

Douglas Derrick  
Interdisciplinary Informatics

Holly Miller  
Communication

Alan Gift  
Chemistry

Annie Hodge  
Mathematics

Erin Pleggenkuhle-Miles  
Marketing and Management

Wilma Kuhlman  
Teacher Education

**Featured Faculty**

**ON CAMPUS**

The Annual Faculty Staff Picnic sponsored by Chancellor Christensen, the UNO Staff Advisory Council, and the UNO Faculty Senate will be held Tuesday, August 18 from 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. in 128/129 HPER.

New Student Convocation will be held August 23 at 2 p.m. in 128 HPERS. Faculty are encouraged to attend.

MavGrants Training—Monday, September 14, from 1:00-2:00 p.m. at the Peter Kiewit Institute (Room 278).

Digital Drop-Ins will be held on September 15, 23, and 24 to answer faculty questions concerning technology issues on campus.

AAUP will host a reception for faculty at the Brazenhead Pub (319 n. 78 St.) on September 25 from 5:00-7:30 p.m.

The Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities (CUMU) will be sponsored by UNO on October 11-13. Faculty are encouraged to attend.

Thank an Educator—Do you know of a faculty member who deserves recognition? Visit the Center for Faculty Excellence website for details on how you can nominate someone from your department or with whom you work for our “Thank an Educator” program.
The Lecture Dilemma

While there is much controversy over the efficacy of lecturing, there are times in the classroom when we all find ourselves in the role of information dispenser. Not to worry! The best of lectures can inspire students to delve further into subject matter, and the lecture can be a valuable tool to simplify difficult information, to open a forum for student inquiry, to correct misconceptions, and to offer more complex alternative perspectives. But current cognitive research demonstrates the quick erosion of the human attention span, and, even when students are listening, they are often hearing through the lens of their own experiences so that what we convey is not what they hear. How then can we make those moments when we must lecture more meaningful? Here are some tips offered by Ken Bain from the Best Teachers Summer Institute:

1. Provide students with an outline of key specific information, allowing lots of room for notes. This can allay fears of missing the “important stuff” and gives students more freedom to listen actively and expand conceptual thinking.
2. Try stopping at times during a lecture and asking students to work in pairs, sharing notes to fill in gaps and clarify concepts.
3. At the end of a lecture, ask students to take a few minutes to write down their major conclusions from the lecture and what further questions they have.
4. Following a lecture, break students into groups and ask them to apply concepts of a lecture to some problem or situation. Leave time to discuss as a class what each group discovered.
5. Try posting a video lecture on Blackboard or writing out your lecture and allowing students to read it in advance. You can then use valuable class time to answer questions and clarify concepts.
6. Try inverting the process. Give students a real world problem to solve and then ask them what challenges they faced. Follow with the concepts of the lecture as solutions to these problems.
7. Give mini-quizzes following the lecture. Current research suggests that this helps students retain concepts more than traditional tests over large sections of material and allows you to gauge comprehension and rectify misunderstandings before students fall too far behind.

Noteworthy

1. Do you have a faculty-related event you would like to include? Email us at facdev@unomaha.edu and let us know.
2. Communities of Practice: Are you involved in or would like to be involved in a Community of Practice? Find out more at http://cfe.unomaha.edu and click on programs. To join our discussion board, like us at www.facebook.com/facex.unomaha.edu.
3. Looking for funding related to pedagogy? Learn more about the different UCAT grants available by visiting http://cfe.unomaha.edu.