the lizard

Spring 1997
Issue number 42

laser insights, zany alternatives and riveting dialogue on teaching and learning

How is the Teaching Effectiveness Program Doing?

The Teaching Effectiveness Program would like you to do a MAT for us. We are asking you in this issue of the Lizard to fill out a Midterm Analysis of Teaching on our program. We have received valuable comments on various program events throughout the year, and now we'd like you to assess our services as a whole. Please give us your honest evaluation of all the program components with which you are familiar and suggest ways in which we can improve our service to you. We would also appreciate hearing your ideas on new services and programs which we may consider for the future. (Send the MAT through campus mail to TEP, Academic Learning Services.)

This issue also contains a number of interviews. TEP talked with many teachers this spring. As we move into summer and a second round of our Instructional Technology Summer Short Course, we wanted to talk with faculty who have been using technology this year in their classes and add their experiences to the mix of information and recommendations we will be giving our new short course participants. We also wanted to share the successes and advice of experienced technology users with those of you who may be launching technology experiments of your own in the coming year.

ier set of interviews are with instructors who the "student interview" for the first time. ting honest and constructive feedback from tudents can make a big difference in teaching—but there is often dissatisfaction with the means by which we do this. Student interviews are unique in that the feedback comes directly from issues which students generate rather than those found on instructor or department-designed instruments. Another unique feature of this form of feedback is that students work in teams to pinpoint teaching skills and behaviors which most help or hinder their learning. The xtreme or isolated comments are filtered out. third component is the ability of the interview cilitator to help students be specific about eir concerns. For example, rather than just ting, "There's too much reading," the facilitacan help students target which specific dings are problematic and why.

nk you. It's been another good year. Not rything went as we'd planned and many rts reaped rewards that surprised and ghted us—not unlike your classroom experies. We don't have all the answers and we e to improve and provide you with what you l in order to do an excellent job with students.

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON MIDTERM ANALYSIS OF TEACHING

Program: **The Teaching Effectiveness Program** Term: Sept. 96-June 97

MARK YOUR RESPONSES IN PENCIL ON THE COMPUTER BUBBLE SHEET

Please read each statement regarding this TEP's services and then indicate the extent to which you feel this program needs improvement. Respond to each statement by selecting one of the following:

A. No improvement is needed (very good or excellent performance)
B. Little improvement is needed (generally good performance)
C. Improvement is needed (generally mediocre performance)
D. Considerable improvement is needed (generally poor performance)
E. No basis for evaluation

SECTION I:PROGRAM SERVICES

1. TEP offers a variety of presenters on diverse teaching/learning topics.
2. Presenters provide useful and relevant information, advice and strategies for effective teaching.
3. TEP workshops are usually worth the time I invest.
4. What I have learned in TEP workshops is applicable to my teaching.
5. What I have learned in TEP workshops has improved my teaching.
6. The *Lizard* newsletter provides useful, relevant and interesting information on teaching and learning.
7. The *Lizard* offers a good balance of topics on various aspects of teaching and learning.
8. The (MAT) gave me useful feedback from my students about my teaching /course design.
9. MAT feedback has helped me make changes to improve my teaching /course design.
10. I have received prompt, courteous and efficient service from TEP.
11.Being videotaped helped me see my teaching from a new perspective.
12. Being videotaped helped me improve my teaching.
13. The videotech arrived on time and set up with minimal disturbance to my class.
14. The follow up video consultation was a comfortable and helpful interaction.
15. TEP's listserv is handled efficiently and does not send me irrelevant information.
16. TEP's listserv is a convenient way to receive program publicity and sign up for TEP events.
17. The TEP website is a valuable on-line resource for teachers.
18. The ARTT website is a valuable on-line resource for teachers .

SECTION II:CONSULTATIONS WITH GEORGEANNE COOPER

19. She conveys respect and seems genuinely interested in helping me improve my teaching.
20. She creates an atmosphere which is comfortable and assures confidentiality.
21. She listens well.
22. She offers useful and relevant advice and suggestions.
23. The consultation has led to improvements in my teaching

SECTION III.CONSULTATIONS WITH MICHAEL SWEET

24. He conveys respect and seems genuinely interested in helping me improve my teaching.
25. He creates an atmosphere which is comfortable and assures confidentiality.
26. He listens well.
27. He offers useful and relevant advice and suggestions.
28. The consultation has led to improvements in my teaching.

SECTION IV:FACULTY/GTF INFORMATION - Please specify:

29. I am 1) tenured faculty 2) non-tenured faculty 3) GTF 4) Instructor 5) Visiting instructor
30. 1) male 2) female
31. Number of TEP services used this year: 1) 0 2) 1-2 3) 2-3 4) 4 5) 5+

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS (These can be e-mailed to gcooper@oregon)

32. Please comment on the TEP services which are most valuable in supporting you as an instructor.

33. Please make suggestions about ways in which the TEP could improve its services.

Instructional Technology Housecalls:
34. Please comment on your technology "housecall." Address whether you received the training you requested and had your questions answered to your satisfaction.

Course Websites: If you build it, will they come?

Ron Mitchell is an assistant professor in political science who teaches an Intro to *International Relations* (200-level) with ~100 students, a *US Foreign Policy* (300-level) with ~100 students, and *International Environmental Politics* (400-level) with ~40 students. He has used web technology in all three courses for the past two years. All three courses are linked on his home page. The most developed is the International Environmental Politics course.

In the following interview, TEP asked Ron to talk with us about the pros and cons of using technology (particularly course websites) in the classroom.

What compelled you to do this ? What did you hope to achieve?

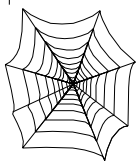
What motivated me is that most teachers using the web conceive of it as a means of improving information flow from teachers to students. The web has the capability to facilitate information flow from students to teachers and students to students as well. These latter two directions of information flow are what really motivated me— I wanted to know my students' views on foreign policy, to have them critique each others' writing, create web pages on particular environmental problems, and simulate the "tragedy of the commons" interactively with other students. I hoped to engage students more in class material.

What did you think this might require of you in terms of time and effort?

I totally underestimated the amount of time and effort it would take, but am convinced that others can avoid such problems by making use of TEP and other on-campus resources.

What are the major components of your course website?

I develop web pages for all my classes so that they consist of three major types of elements: "outputs," "throughputs," and "inputs." **Outputs** are the course-related information I produce and use the web to distribute, such as the syllabus, lecture notes, assignments, handouts, etc. **Throughputs** are the links to information that others have put on the web which are relevant to the course, links to Knight Library, on-line bibliographies, data sources, etc.

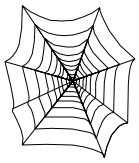


I wanted to know my students' views on foreign policy, to have them critique each others' writing, create web pages on particular environmental problems, simulate the "tragedy of the commons" interactively with other students.

Inputs are the tools I have been trying to develop to allow students to contribute to the course, such as surveys of student opinions, student-created course-relevant web pages, postings of in-class discussion questions, postings of paper proposals, critiques of others' paper proposals, on-line discussions, and student-created data sets. I believe that "inputs" provide the most exciting and most rewarding potential for any course using a web page. They can, at their best, encourage students to teach each other and the instructor, which makes the classroom a more exciting place.

What does it take to do it "right"— time and energy?

Doing it right can take a ton of time and energy, but doesn't need to. My suggestion is to try to think through clearly what your goals are for using the web and then to design a plan for getting those parts into your web page at the minimum cost in time to you. My other suggestion (which I wish I had followed) is to seek early and frequent assistance from TEP and those on campus who have set up interesting web pages. Also, if you see an interesting web page, on or off campus, email the author and ask whether you can copy the page and edit it to fit your own course— an easy thing to do with Netscape Gold 3.0 software.

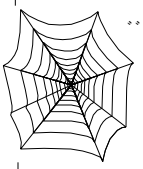


if you see an interesting web page, email the author and ask whether you can copy the page and edit it to fit your own course - an easy thing to do with Netscape Gold 3.0 software.

In terms of your investment, what have you gained?

My major gain has been from the increased student input and interaction. It hasn't been dramatic or earth-shaking, but when students answer surveys on foreign policy, provide weekly discussion questions via a Motet page, develop web pages on environmental issues of interest to them, or comment on each other's paper proposals, I believe they become more engaged them more in the substance of the course. The big gain for me is, therefore, knowing more about my students by finding another way to hear their views when time in class can be so short. Another gain, however, has been the ability to provide more information to more students, e.g., lecture notes, extensive subject bibliographies and links to data sources for student term papers, etc.

Students had different responses. My sense is that students follow patterns in using the web similar to those they follow in the non-electronic classroom. Some quiet students will write a lot on the web, but not many. Rather, I think the web provides some students with an additional means to engage the course material and proactively learn and gives other students additional resources (especially lecture notes, bibliographies, data sources) for succeeding in the class.



...the web provides students with an additional means to engage the course material and proactively learn and gives other students additional resources for succeeding in the class.

What were the costs for you and your students?

The main costs for me were efforts in creating web materials and "time wasted learning how to use the web efficiently." I think I know how to do that now, but it was a big time investment. I urge others to avoid these costs by looking for people who will show them the most efficient ways to use the web. The many web publishing courses offered on campus are a great place to start.

The costs to students were three-fold: 1) time spent learning Motet and how to use the web generally; 2) time spent waiting for a computer to free up at one of the labs on campus; 3) and frustrations with the technology.

How can instructors avoid "burnout" from using technology in teaching?

I think the best advice here is to ramp up slowly, do a few things well, and pace yourself. For someone using the web for the first time, I would identify three or four things you want to do on the web and limit yourself to those, e.g., posting lectures, posting student discussion questions (via Motet), providing bibliographies to help students start papers, and conducting one web-based survey.

How can teachers maximize available resources?

Check with TEP for all the web-related resources on campus. Both individuals and specific offices on campus can provide a wealth of information on what works, what doesn't, how to do something new or more efficiently. Making any change to a syllabus or incorporating web components will take some investment, but it can pay off rapidly. The best resources are the students in your class. Have them pose weekly questions via Motet that get graded. This has the virtue of being intellectually demanding for the student, introduces student concerns into weekly discussions, and simultaneously reduces teacher workload. Likewise, have students post paper proposals. This allows students (as well as myself and the GTF) to comment on them, which increases the feedback students receive and forces them to provide a thoughtful, constructive critique rather than merely receiving such critiques. As long as these assignments replace existing assignments, students like them and find they help engage the material.

What are the keys to making technology work in the classroom?

I think the real keys to making technology work involves:

1) **Integrate**: Web components must be fully integrated into the class to be effective. Refer to lecture notes and handouts posted on the web, raise discussion questions posed by students on Motet, comment on student proposals. If it's not integrated, students won't use it.

2) **Substitute, Don't Add**: Each time a web requirement or assignment is added to a syllabus, an old requirement or assignment should be dropped.

3) **Use It For Input**: Get students writing, not clicking. With the exception of the index finger, surfing the Web often is as intellectually passive as TV. To make it active, give clear and intellectually demanding assignments which use Motet, other "form" based pages, or student-created web pages.

What is your advice to anyone who is attempting to integrate technology into teaching?

Seek advice. For someone getting started, look at other course web pages around the U of O and find several that you like. Then ask the instructor responsible for the page out for coffee and have them tell you how to do it. Web designers have great tips for making course webpage design easy. Usually they will happily tell you a trick which, if they'd only known it, would have saved them ten hours. Let them tell it to you. I have put a bunch of mine on a page at:

http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~rmitchel/showtell

How will you move forward with technology?

My course this winter demonstrated to me that there is a middle ground. I believe the web can be useful and can help students learn more than they would otherwise. A survey showed that more than half my students felt that the web helped them out in the course, and the others didn't feel it hurt. This winter I intentionally wanted to experiment with different ways to use the web (see my course page at **http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~rmitchel/iep/).** Some ideas worked and some didn't. My main direction from here is to focus on doing a few things well—having students post proposals, comment on proposals, provide discussion questions, and create issue-specific web pages. I will still try to use the web for output (lecture notes, assignments) and throughput (links to relevant pages).

One goal is to find ways to minimize the effort needed to manage and maintain a course web page — talking to other faculty who have good web pages, writing pages in Netscape, getting assistance, giving students credit for creating intellectually-demanding and course-related web pages, and using "canned" packages like Motet.

(For a more comprehensive report on the ways I have used instructional technology in my classes, please see **http:/darkwing.uoregon.edu/~rmitchel/webteach/report.shtml**

The Power of Powerpoint

Cathleen Leue, assistant professor of economics, teaches Econ 202 - *Macroeconomic Principles* to 230 students in 180 PLC. In this TEP interview, Cathleen discusses her use of PowerPoint presentations in her lectures and other forms of course-related instructional technology.

Describe the ways in which you currently use technology in your classes.

All lecture notes are done as PowerPoint presentations. About 75% of the information is given in the slide show. The outlines for the slide show form the beginning basis for class notes. The advantage of PowerPoint presentations over overheads is that you can make each "slide" much more dramatic than overheads through movement, color, sounds.

The "slides" are stored on the computer and in electronic form. These slides can be converted into other documents such as notes, html docs, etc. The slides can be converted to graphics and run from a Web page.

Pre-prepared overheads and PowerPoint slides are similar in that if one is not careful, the presentation can move too quickly because it is canned.

Pre-prepared overheads and PowerPoint are inferior to using the board or the overhead projector "live" or in real time for some concepts. If I have to solve a problem or construct a graph, it is better done step-by-step in front of the students. Having the students observe the process is more important than having them observe the static finished product.

What compelled you to use technology in these ways in your economics course in the first place? What did you hope to achieve?

I saw PowerPoint as a good way of communicating information in a large section. I could make sure I covered everything and it would be more clear than me writing on an overhead. It also had the nice spinoff in allowing me to easily create a set of class notes.

I think I saw the web as a good teaching tool in terms of being almost an encyclopedic source of information. It allows me to cover some topics in more detail, and allows me to update economic statistics instantaneously.

In addition, my job in SSIL requires that I assist faculty doing the same sort of thing in the classroom. I thought doing it myself would give me good insights on what works and what doesn't work.

What are the major components of using the web in your class?

I have a basic web page to distribute class information. Students can download the course syllabus, class notes, reading assignments, homework assignments, homework solutions, test keys, and point distributions from the page. I try to use the site as a message board, letting students know what they have missed in class. They can use the study aids from the site. These study aids include: practice exams, a glossary, the Layman's Guide to Economics, and various links that describe topical course material in great detail, such as collecting the unemployment rate statistics, how the CPI is calculated, the definition of money, the structure of the Federal Reserve, etc.. Finally, students can use links that I've created to look up the most current economic statistics instead of looking in the Wall Street Journal. First it was for course-related information: notes, syllabus, etc. Right now I am also using it for assignments. Students have to track the various indicators of economic activity. The initial idea was that they would do this using the newspaper, however the web proved to be more useful.

What does it take to do it "right"? Is it worth it?

It takes a tremendous amount of time— probably 10 more hours a week. If you do not put in the time, there is a real possibility for failure. There is much more written information that has to be proofed. If one does not spend this time, then credibilty is lost. Also there is a lot of checking to ensure that the technology works.

I do think it is worth it for me. I have gotten very good feedback from students. They love the presentations, they love accessing classnotes and practice tests. If I were in a different position—working on tenure—I'd need to decide if I can afford to put that much extra time into my teaching.

The extra time I put in has benefits for me in my job as SSIL director, as well. I can justify it as job development for my role as a faculty support person. I can use the time invested to better assist my social science faculty in teaching with technology.

What has the gain been for you as an instructor? For your students?

My gain has been the increased communication with my students about the class structure. I presented this course and the various technology endeavors as a work-in-progress or an experiment. I invited feedback from students and I've never gotten so much feedback from a course! I have learned tremendously from this and can use the information to restructure my course design.

I have gained many skills that are technology-related which will assist me in my other job as SSIL director. I also learned a great deal about economic information sources on the web.

Students have learned how to use the web. They have a better preview of what to expect from me as an instructor. They have learned more than students have in the past due to the increased amount of "official" information from their instructor. If they don't have to rely on footnotes, they can easily access old tests, the test answers, etc.

They also have learned about different sources of good economic information on the web.

What were the costs for your students?

The costs to the student are: extra time needed to learn to use the web, the time spent searching for a seat to use the web.

How do you avoid burnout in relation to teaching with technology?

Take it in small chunks. Do a little every quarter. What I do has evolved over three years. I started with PowerPoint for part of the class, then added a web page, then added web exercises .

What are the keys to making technology work in the classroom?

1) Have a good idea about what works well with technology and what doesn't. I still use the overhead in my class to develop graphs and work out problems. These things don't do well as "canned" items.

2) PowerPoint works well in explaining lists of things. If the material I'm covering does not lend itself well to this, I won't use PowerPoint to present the material.

3) Be prepared. You must test everything. If you don't, it won't work.

4) Be prepared to do something else if it doesn't work.

5) Finally, try not to make technology the centerpiece to the course. It is a useful tool, but should not be the focus of what we are doing.

What is your advice to anyone who is attempting to integrate technology into teaching?

Go slow. Try to plan to use technology where it is appropriate. Let good teaching be your end goal, and have technology help you reach this goal.

How will you move forward with technology?

I would like to use technology that would help me gauge how well students in large lectures are understanding the material in real time. That is, I would like to use a touch pad system that would allow me to gather information during class.

A touch pad is an input device that is networked to a central computer. It is a small hand-held computer with a keyboard. These touchpads could be distributed to every student in the classroom. An instructor could

pose questions to a class and the students would use the touchpad to enter in an answer. The response is recorded on a central computer and the computer then compiles the results.

I could compile the information and come to some conclusions about what my students' understanding was at that point in time. When teaching a smaller class, an instructor usually gains a "feel" for the class's understanding of the material. This is done by observing body language, comments etc. In the large lecture, students are more stoic and harder to read. This device would allow me to try to bring a smaller classroom "feel" to the larger lecture.

Managing Motet

This interview features Holly Arrow, Assistant Professor in Psychology, who was new to UO this year and participated in last year's Instructional Technology Summer Short Course. We asked Holly to discuss the results of her experiments using Motet with her psychology classes this year.

In an earlier Lizard article, we discussed a piece of conferencing software called Motet. To refresh your memory, here's a short explanation of what Motet is:

Motet is a centralized piece of software that Lucy Lynch in the Computing Center maintains, on which you can set up "conferences" for courses you teach. These conferences are accessible via a Web-browser and can contain as many threads of conversation as you want. These threads are organized into "topics," and anyone using a conference (teacher or student) can create a new topic. Contributions to discussion are posted in the order that they are received, and at the bottom of each thread is a dialogue box where students can make their own contribution to each discussion. Each user's e-mail address is also a "hot-link" to private e-mail, so that users can have private side discussions, if they choose.

If you prefer to "learn by doing," go to this address: http://www.sonic.net/~foggy/motet/html/demo.html and register. It's a very simple, quick process that will take you to the Motet demo site where you can tour this teaching tool.

Why did you decide to use Motet?

Although I was uncertain about it, the enthusiasm of TEP folk and my confidence in Lucy Lynch (Computing Center) and the other support personnel convinced me it was worth a try.

In both of the classes I have used it for, the impact of technology on group interaction was a course topic, and I felt that having the face-to-face discussions and MOTET discussions to compare would make the topic less abstract — students could check the findings in the literature against their own experience.

For the larger class, I wanted a space for discussion in which all students would feel comfortable participating, which is not true in a large class discussion. In a class of 55, it is simply not feasible for all students to talk in a single discussion. But this is possible on Motet.

How does Motet compare to other forms of electronic communication which you have used?

I like it MUCH BETTER than the listserv approach, because the discussion is "located" and organized in a space that belongs to the class, rather than peppered in among everyone's incoming e-mail. Also, I don't want a deluge of extra e-mail. On Motet, I could read 15 messages in a topic and add my own post. All students on Motet would see that I was reading and responding. With straight e-mail, I would have to write 15 responses to achieve the same effect.

For a small seminar, a listserv is probably less hassle — easy to set up, doesn't require students to learn new skills, and the volume of messages is low. For a large class, I think Motet is a big improvement.

I also have an extensive set of web pages for the class. I discovered that it doesn't work very well to cut and paste formatted material into Motet — it basically works best for straight conversation.

I use an “announcements” topic in Motet as an alternative to broadcast messages, and may refer students to new info I’ve just posted on the web. The two work well together.

For what kinds of assignments/interactions do you see Motet best suited?

I have had the best response to the assignment of weekly “journal” entries, in which students relate the readings and lectures for the week to their own experiences. For the “leadership” week, for example, students talked about groups in which they had been a leader, or that seemed to have leadership problem, etc.

Why?

Everyone is an expert on their own experience. Putting all students on an equal footing and these kinds of posts seemed to stimulate discussion and commentary among the students. They stopped trying to impress the professor and began to talk amongst themselves, integrating the course material naturally into the discussion.

So new posts would begin “I had an experience similar to Chris’s, except that people didn’t resent the leader so much ... I think maybe that’s because the leader was using the X style instead of the Z leadership style.”

What do you see as Motet’s primary drawbacks for UO teachers?

The interface is not user-friendly; many students have technical difficulties either getting on Motet in the first place or not being able to get on some weeks even after using it without incident for several weeks. It's necessary to have some kind of “graceful degradation” fallback plan. Mine was that students could turn in hard copy journals or just e-mail me directly if Motet wasn’t letting them on or they couldn’t get it to work.

What do you think is the most effective way to integrate Motet as a constructive part of your class?

You need regular (weekly) assignments that inspire discussion and are directly related to class material. Posting on Motet should count for part of the students' grade (I count the journals as the 10% “participation” grade, and basically if they post every week, they get the full credit).

What words of advice would you give to a newcomer who was thinking about trying Motet?

1) Go wander about the existing conferences and see for yourself which topics and approaches seem to generate the quality of discussion you would like to achieve. If you go to my current class site (457S97-Arrow) I have a topic called somthing like “Advice to Professors who want to use Motet.” My students have posted advice there based on their experience in my class.

2) Provide an alternative for students who have serious access problems, are aggressively helpless about technology, or who might experience temporary technical difficulties (crashed computers, etc.) that prevent them from getting on Motet.

3) Do a demonstration using a laptop and computer projection so students can see you walk through the process. I had Lucy Lynch from the Computing Center come and do a presentation, but will probably do this myself next time so I can focus on the way I want them to use Motet rather than on a more general overview of the system that is not so class-specific. (Cathleen Leue in the Social Science Instructional Lab can help you set up an in-class Motet demo-346-4642, cleue@oregon)

4) Include step-by-step instructions on your course syllabus for getting logged in to Motet .

InFlux: Reflections on Educational Technology

These days, computer technology involves so many variables that many people find it daunting even to think about, let alone invite into their teaching. Hardware, software, networks, mainframes. . . increasingly, it could be compared to the "Wild West." It is a place where rough-and-ready pioneers with a natural sense for the terrain thrive and forge ahead, while the wagon-trains of "normal folk" looking for a better life follow at a distance.

It is rewarding to listen to teachers who are considered the "advance scouts" of the wagon train—those at the leading edge of the mainstream. These "folks" differ from the pioneers in that their capabilities and responsibilities liken them more to the majority of their teaching colleagues, but their curiosity and inventiveness enable them to put technology to use in simple and intriguing ways. This month I talked to two such "scouts"—Deborah Exton, an instructor in Chemistry and Diane Walton, a GTF in Education.

THE INTRODUCTORY CHEMISTRY LAB SEQUENCE sometimes consists of up to 500 students, and Deborah Exton oversees its instruction. The classes are lab-and homework-intensive, and many students may not realize how uncertain they are about course concepts until they actually sit down to do the lab write-ups. If this unpleasant realization occurs the night before the write-up is due, they may not have time to get the help they need. Therefore, not only do they do poorly on the lab, but--more importantly—they do not learn those concepts.

To address this problem, Deborah and her post-doc Chris Grant have designed the "virtual TA," which is available on a Web-site, 24 hours per day. The VTA not only provides a list of answers to frequently asked questions for each lab question set, but can also check the students' calculations for them. Significantly, the VTA does *not* give the students the right answers, but asks for the data they collected themselves, runs the appropriate calculations, and tells them the difference between their answer the answer it came up with for their data. For example, it wouldtell them if their answer is within .3% of the computer's calculated result. Check out the Virtual TA at:

http://chemlabs.uoregon.edu/Classes/Exton/VirtualTA/CH228VTA.html

or, for more information, e-mail Deborah at dexton@oregon.uoregon.edu.

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF CAMPUS, Diane Walton spent this term GTFing for Larry Irvin's Education 311 class. In addition to three discussion sections she led in the traditional, face-to-face format, she decided to run one section completely on-line. On the first day of the term, she announced the on-line section to the entire class, and volunteers self-selected to participate. The on-line course consisted of a listserv, on which she posted a reading-related "thought for the week" at the beginning of each week, and otherwise "lurked," posting very rarely and letting the students carry most of the discussion.

The conversational manners of the two groups differed curiously. Though computer-mediated communication is technically a "colder" medium, she found the on-line students quicker to express and support their emotional responses to the readings and lectures. They were also much more willing to base their arguments on personal experience, and therefore disclose more about themselves, which generated a "warmer" social climate. Compared to the "look-at-me-I-did-the-reading" conversational manner of her face-to-face groups, Diane considers the on-line experiment a success and is going to try it again. For more information, e-mail Diane at diane.WALTON@state.or.us.

Instructors Comment on Student Interviews

Student interviews are managed by a TEP facilitator who comes to the class for the first 20 minutes. The instructor leaves and students (in teams) discuss what's working well and not so well in the course and make suggestions for improvement. This anonymous information is later discussed with the instructor. Call TEP (6-2177,gcooper@oregon) to arrange a student interview).

Why did you decide to use a student interview?

-I wanted to figure out why my teaching evaluations were low and I couldn't determine this from the MAT or the my departmental evaluations. Also, I wanted to rule out unrealistic student comments in written evaluations and I appreciate the opinion of a professional.

-To improve my teaching and also to show the students I care about their feedback.

-The MAT was too threatening—too overwhelming. This was a nice compromise. I felt comfortable that a TEP staff person would be an impartial facilitator, would elicit student responses, yet be able to articulate findings in a constructive way.

How does the student interview feedback compare to other feedback instruments you have tried?

-The student interview concentrates more on the important things that may be wrong in the class, as opposed to the strange comments that one sometimes gets from written evaluations.

-I like the fact that students get into groups and discuss the teacher instead of individual feedback. I haven't used the MAT, but would like to. It's more focused than our departmental evaluation form.

-The only other assessment tool I've used is the end-of-term teaching evaluations, which consist of a questionnaire and a page for open-ended response. I like the midterm plan better because it allows room for improvement while there's time to correct a problem.

Were you able to make constructive changes based on this feedback?

-It turned out the particular class that was evaluated went pretty well, but I was able to make some minor changes based on the feedback.

-Yes. I addressed several problems and responded to others that I either disagreed with or could not change.

-Yes, I've tried some new things. Also I was much more cognizant of classroom dynamics and structuring things to elicit more equal student participation. I am also trying to be more proactive in guiding discussions. Now I know what I need to work on and have some ideas about how to do this (instead of feeling helpless). The interviews as well as meeting with Georgeanne one-on-one have helped identify the problem areas and fit strategies to those areas.

Did the changes you made make a difference?

-Since there was nothing really wrong with the class, I wouldn't call the changes that I made significant, although I think they certainly helped improve the class.

-Don't know.

-Some people have talked who didn't before. I am consciously not letting students lead discussions in directions I don't want to go. I'm not allowing the one problem student to take over discussions.

Would you use the student interview again? Why or why not?

-Yes! I am planning to do student interviews in all of my undergraduate classes, I think the student interviews are the best way to get feedback on the class.

-Yes.

-Yes, definitely. It delivers info in a constructive way; not threatening. Next term I would like to be observed by TEP—maybe even brave enough to be videotaped.

How can we make this tool more valuable for you?

-I am very enthusiastic about the student interviews. One thing that will make it even more valuable is to have TEP come back and do a follow-up to see whether the instructor has been successful in making improvements.

-Ask us to submit a few questions that we specifically want feedback on.

-It's made a difference in my attitude (hopeful, not helpless) and I think that students appreciated the process.