The Teaching Professor Conference

June 2-4, 2017

St. Louis, MO

Marriott St. Louis Grand

Dear Teaching Council Members,

With help from the Teaching Council, I was privileged to attend the 2017 Teaching Professor Conference in St. Louis, Missouri last June. With only two and one-half days to attend sessions, I made the most of every day's offerings and had discussions and made comparisons with as many professors as time allowed me. I heard the latest thought in teaching with technology and best practices from presenters who were often experts in their fields and/or successful life-long educators. It was a truly exciting conference and one I will never forget for the techniques I learned for both online and face-to-face classes.

Even in this short timeframe, there were more than sixty concurrent sessions, plus plenary sessions, poster sessions, and optional preconference workshops from which to choose . I attended sessions on "Exposure to Tech Tools" designed to enhance teaching with tools such as cloud-based collaboration, virtual reality, gamification, course design, polls, and feedback. I learned that Wikis are effective when there is a class project that allows every student to contribute and even make changes to the content. In place of the "Reflection Paragraph" at the end of face-to-face classes, I am now requiring the students to produce a Word document telling me what they learned in that day's lecture. This practice encourages better listening and note-taking, and it helps with making the knowledge or procedure more their own. Then, I share some of

these as reminders and reinforcers for the whole class. Also, I am using the Discussion Board and Blackboard Collaborate for our required Communication and Teamwork Components for SACS this semester. This is completely different from how I have used these tools in the past. Since this conference, I also had enough confidence to make all my syllabi "clickable" with "Weekly Units" and am working closely with Sandra Bogus to make Blackboard Exemplary Courses for all four of my classes.

One especially good idea is for student presentations at the end of the semester. In my English 1302 classes, students write about some aspect of their major field of study and do oral presentations afterwards to teach the rest of us what they learned. The section below explains a particularly effective presentation style:

"Pecha Kucha is a presentation style that originated in Japan in the field of architecture. The parameters of a Pecha Kucha presentation require exactly 20 slides that automatically advance every 20 seconds. Each slide presents a single image that directly correlates to the presenter's key concept. Text is limited to a maximum of five words, presented in a large font size. This format keeps Pecha Kucha presentations succinct and fast moving. The effectiveness of Pecha Kucha–style presentations supports the cognitive theory of multimedia learning."

Teaching this method to students will eliminate common presentation problems such as extraneous text, reading from PowerPoint slides, off-topic tangents, and distracting animation features.

After attending The Teaching Professor Conference, attendees are encouraged to submit their own proposals for presenting at the next conference. This is my goal and I am actively exploring my possibilities. Thank you, Teaching Council, for providing funding for me to become more technologically aware.