Fundraising for CLAS Scholarship, Academic Integrity, new students

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| CLAS Acts June 2016 content |

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FROM THE DEAN’S DESKThe hallways are quieter now but administrative offices are working hard on salaries, reports, orientations, preparing for new faculty, and generally getting on to the next thing—whatever that may be.  Behind the college office, the new Holton-Hooker living center is taking shape fast, making it easier to imagine reclaiming a large chunk of parking lot on the schedule that has been described to us.  Meanwhile, the expansion of the Performing Arts Center has begun.  Our recruiting of the freshman class—the class of ’20, wow!—is going well.  It is worthwhile to remember that we can’t take our enviable position for granted.  The news has been full of universities with issues that we hope—and work hard—never to confront.  Faculty at University of Wisconsin are writing about why they are leaving.  University of Missouri is facing a decline of 1,400 first-time freshmen.  The news is also full of the very topic our CLAS faculty addressed in the most recent Out of the Box series.  I applaud our Faculty Council for working on the challenges in teaching modern students, who come to us from what one writer called a helicopter society which prepares students differently than how we may remember from earlier in our careers.  We are also reminded not to jump too quickly on any bandwagon—especially if it may project onto impoverished youth reforms du jour that may not be appropriate.  We find in our classrooms students with virtually identical GPA and ACT numbers year-to-year, but who show us a complex set of ways in which they are not the same—some of these are wonderful and others give us pause and make us rethink our pedagogy, our curricular architecture, and the way we deploy limited resources.  Our challenge is to do this wisely based on more than just our gut and anecdote.  These are discussions we should have, inquiries we should make, and challenges to be creative. I know you’re working hard, whether it’s at teaching spring term or your scholarship, or in a couple of important cases, new community engagement. Do remember to get some sunshine, but don’t forget the sunscreen.    |

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CLAS on the GreenThis month on Wednesday, June 15 we will hold our annual CLAS Endowed Scholarship Fund fundraiser--a fun golf scramble at The Meadows.  Come for the golf ($95 for 18 holes) or the cookout afterward ($25) and support the scholarship while having some fun and chances for fun prizes.  Register online. |

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| Increased Learning to Support Academic IntegrityAs the review of relevant research in a series of Chronicle of Higher Ed articles by James M. Lang attests, academic dishonesty has been an issue for at least the 60 some years it has been directly studied. Some contemporary challenges have arisen in the form of websites that encourage students to provide tests and assignment, but at the core of the issue remains the calculation of stress, opportunity, stakes and risks. In the first article in the series, Lang argues that “the amount of cheating that takes place on our campuses may well depend on the structures of the learning environment.  The curriculum requirements, the course design, the daily classroom practices, the nature and administration of assignments and exams, and the students' relationship with the instructor—all of those can be modified in order to reduce (or induce, if we so wanted) cheating.”At the heart of his argument is the desire to make learning the better option.  As he puts it, “in spite of our best efforts to promote academic integrity in our students and police our exams and assignments, [we] nudge them toward more cheating and less learning.”As the series continues, Lang interprets the research as pointing to some principles that can guide faculty to a better situation.  The research I've cited here supports a clear principle: Offer students frequent, low-stakes opportunities to demonstrate their learning to you. The more assessments you provide, the less pressure you put on students to do well on any single assignment or exam. If you maintain a clear and consistent academic integrity policy, and ensure that all students caught cheating receive an immediate and substantive penalty, the benefit of cheating on any one assessment will be small, while the potential consequences will be high. Taking into account various counterarguments such as the need to prepare students for stressful licensure exams and other high stakes tests, he returns to his core idea that, “You shouldn't redesign your courses just to reduce cheating. You should redesign them in order to increase learning.“ In the final installment, Lang looks at research into memory and the relationship of testing to learning.  He states, “an extremely robust body of research demonstrates that taking frequent quizzes and exams actually *produces* learning, and does so far more effectively than studying or reviewing notes.”Whether a faculty member buys the entirety of this line of argument or not, there is much to chew on here.  The CLAS Faculty Council also provided resources for our faculty in 2010 as the outcome of the Out of the Box workshops that year.  And the CLAS Student Advisory Committee provided their perspective on what faculty can do.  Access these resources here.The Faculty Teaching and Learning Center (FTLC), of course, also has offerings with bearing on this subject such as a recent workshop that included this article: “Stop Students Who Cheat before They Become Cheating Professors” by Brigitte Vittrup, April 27, 2016 (http://chronicle.com/article/Stop-Students-Who-Cheat-Before/236269) .  FTLC also has handouts available and directs interested faculty to this online mentoring session on “Minimizing Cheating in the Classroom” (Magna Online Mentor Commons: http://www.gvsu.edu/ftlc/20-minute-mentor-commons-39.htm).UAS has asked the FTLC advisory committee to investigate ways to promote best practices for academic integrity, especially in regards to online courses. Some new resources will be posted on the FTLC website for fall.  |

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