

# 'In The Loop'



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## Rethinking Race: A Valuable Faculty Resource

Ever ask yourself "What learning matters in college"? Do you consider essential learning to involve intercultural knowledge and competence gained through practice with big questions and contemporary issues? Unfortunately, degree programs find it difficult to build the opportunity for practice into the curriculum. For students to gain this knowledge, individual faculty must purposely design the learning objective into their courses.

*Rethinking Race: Black, White and Beyond* is a purposely scheduled series of expert keynote speakers and discussion sessions to allow seamless integration of intercultural knowledge and competence into all courses across campus. This year, *Rethinking Race* will take place from Feb 1 – 12, 2010. We are excited to bring to campus such na-

tionally known experts as Michael Eric Dyson, Tim Wise, David Williams, Herman Boone, Evelyn Hu-Dehart, Hazel Symonette and local experts Robert Roche and State Senator Sue Morano. In addition we have 16 face-to-face discussion topics with more expected. Information on speakers and faculty resources are available at [www.uakron.edu/race](http://www.uakron.edu/race).

There are number of ways to include *Rethinking Race* into your spring courses: 1) bonus points for students who attend a specific number of events, 2) redesign a writing, reflection or critical thinking exercise or use one of our suggested assignments, or 3) assign suggested reading and ask students to think critically about what was gained.

Not quite sure this is a good fit for your class? Consider the following list

of very general learning objectives which can be the basis for including a *Rethinking Race* topic into your course:

- Able to critique a public speech
- Aware of contemporary issues
- Able to apply knowledge in a new context
- Effective communication of a position/issue
- Aware of social responsibility
- Demonstrate information literacy
- Able to apply ethical reasoning
- Demonstrate critical thinking skills

*Rethinking Race* is a valuable faculty resource to allow all students mastery of essential 21<sup>st</sup> century knowledge and skills. Through seamless integration into your courses faculty are truly answering the question, *What learning matters in college?* Register your class at <http://www.uakron.edu/race/announcement/>.

**Rethinking Race had more than 3800 participants last year. Here's what students had to say:**

*"More discussions about race need to occur until everyone understands."*

*"Why don't we do more of this?"*

*"This is why I came to college."*



## Register for ITL Events Online!

ITL offers a variety of engaging speakers and workshops for faculty, instructional staff, and teaching assistants. On Dec 9<sup>th</sup> we are hosting Charlie Nutt, Executive Director of NACADA, who will speak on **Advising at UA: A Great Partnership with Teaching**. Already

planned for Jan 27<sup>th</sup> is a webinar entitled, **Student Motivation: The Key to Improving Retention and Student Success**.

Look for our spring schedule including our successful Future Faculty series for teaching assistants. Visit our updated website,

[www.uakron.edu/itl](http://www.uakron.edu/itl), then click "Seminars, Workshops, and Presentations" to see all of the upcoming events. ITL events are also regularly listed in E-mail Digest. Want to suggest a speaker or workshop; send us your suggestions via email at [itl@uakron.edu](mailto:itl@uakron.edu).

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## Thoughts on Teaching and Learning – *Millennial Students*

There has been much conversation on the differences between current traditional-aged students compared to previous generations. Individuals born between 1982 and the present are in the Millennial Generation, also known as the Internet Generation, Echo Boomers and the Digital Generation (Jonas-Dwyer, 2004). Faculty may uncover new ways to reach these students by considering these differences and reflecting upon how their teaching practices might be modified to enhance learning.

Howe and Strauss (2003) note the following characteristics of Millennial students:

Special	Sheltered
Confident	Pressured
Achieving	Conventional
Team-oriented	

Some important points to consider ac-

ording to Oblinger (2003) in terms of educating Millennial students are:

- Typing is preferred to handwriting.
- Doing is more important than knowing.
- There is zero tolerance for delays.
- Using digital information versus ownership is blurring.
- Multitasking is a way of life.
- Staying connected is essential.

Jonas-Dwyer and Pospisil (2004) created a list of what Millennials want in terms of teaching and learning. These include:

- You be the leader
- Challenge me
- Let me work with friends
- Let's have fun
- Respect me and be flexible.

Faculty should expect that there is no one formula even when it comes to Millennial students. Luckily some ideas

work for most students such as clear goals and expectations and frequent feedback. Consider how you can make use of Springboard! to keep students connected to the learning goals for the course. Anticipate when a student might get stuck and build in some added support and guidance in the form of an embedded video, online chat, or other learning objects. Easy access to online resources that connect to an interesting point can lead to a teachable moment and really suit Millennial students.

*Howe, N. & Strauss, W. (2003). Millennials go to college. American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions offices and Life Course Associates.*

*Jonas-Dwyer, D & Pospisil, R. (2004). The Millennial effect: Implications for academic development.*

*HERDSA, 194-207. Oblinger, D. (2003, July/August). Boomers, Gen-Xers, and Millennials: Understanding the new students. Educause review, 37-47.*

## What's New in ITL. Teaching and Learning Conversations: The Issue of Course Withdrawal

When you ask UA students why they withdraw (WD) from classes after the second week, you might be surprised at their answers. An ITL research group has been working on this question through survey and interview research methods.

Many of us may have thought the reasons were most often personal issues beyond the student's control such as the demands of families, jobs, or perhaps, health concerns. In fact, when we asked students the reasons for their WDs, the more typical answer was because of grades. Some students were only satisfied with high grades, so when they were not achieving their personal expectations, they decided to withdraw. Others considered a WD on their transcript as looking better than an F. And perhaps most surprising of all, almost all students we interviewed said that withdrawing from courses made them feel like a quitter.

Students felt that withdrawing from courses held few official consequences

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*"It's my problem caused by my own lack of effort."*

*"The way he was teaching it I don't think I was prepared for it."*

*"It was a little more challenging than I thought it would be."*

*"It makes you look like a quitter or that you think you can't handle it."*

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and saw it as "not a big deal." For example, financial implications were rarely mentioned in interviews. Additionally, while students tended to think highly of their instructors they were very reluctant to seek them out and ask for advice. Issues around withdrawing were more frequently discussed with parents and other family members.

Have we captured your interest? Then join us in a new ITL offering we call

**TLCs** (Teaching & Learning Conversations) as we discuss this issue in a

five-series conversation.

**TLCs** on course withdrawal are scheduled for the following dates:

1. The extent and impact of patterns of course withdrawal – January 19<sup>th</sup> at 2:00
2. Myths and excuses related to withdrawing from courses – January 29<sup>th</sup> at 12:00
3. Millennials and WDs – February 1<sup>st</sup> at 9:00
4. What are students thinking? – February 17<sup>th</sup> at 12:00
5. WD or take the F? – February 25<sup>th</sup> at 3:00

Prior to each TLC keep a lookout for a brief summary of the relevant findings from the research team. The conversations will be an opportunity to consider the purpose of a university course withdrawal policy and discuss some creative ideas to reduce student's reliance on course withdrawals as an academic strategy.

## National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) Audit Team Visits UA – October 7-9, 2009

A National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) team, comprised of Dr. Charlie Nutt, Executive Director of NACADA, Dr. Nancy King of Kenesaw State University, and Dr. Susan Campbell of the University of Southern Maine visited The University of Akron October 7-9, 2009. The audit results reported on the institution's strengths, challenges, and recommendations.

The audit team identified several areas of strength regarding academic advising at The University of Akron. These strengths include the following areas:

- FYE Task Force on Academic Advising, First-Year Council, Student Success and Retention Committee
- Peer Mentoring in the Office of Mul-

ticultural Development (OMD)

- University College and the Academic Advisement Center
- Honors College
- College of Nursing
- Institute for Teaching and Learning
- Executive Leadership understand the Mission of The University of Akron as well as the Connection between Academic Advising and Student Success.
- Commitment to Educational Access and Programmatic Innovation.
- Commitment to Assessment and Data-Driven Decision Making.

The audit team also listed various recommendations for the institution in the area of academic advising. These recommendations were identified under

general themes. These themes include:

- Leadership for Academic Advising
- Communication
- Collaboration and Coordination
- Professional Growth and Development
- Assessment and Data-Driven Decision-Making

The complete audit report can be located on Springboard within the content section of the community site titled "Resources for Advising and Mentoring of Students". If you have questions, please contact Bill Torgler, Assistant Director, Academic Advisement Center, at 330-972-7327, or at

[wtorgler@uakron.edu](mailto:wtorgler@uakron.edu).

## Rethinking STEM Through a Civic issue

Science and math can be some of the most difficult General Education classes for our undergraduate students to complete. This Spring, ITL will sponsor a Faculty Learning Community to allow a team of faculty to come together and develop course content that connects science and quantitative thinking skills to a local civic issue all students can relate to.

As one aspect of a recent \$300,000 National Science Foundation grant, faculty will consider the issue of water whether it is for recreation in the Cuyahoga Valley, securing public health or

controlling costs to attain environmental standards. The issues are broad enough to allow integration into many courses across campus. For example, do we understand the social justice implications of the ongoing Akron versus EPA lawsuit? What is the role of elected officials to ensure our public utilities are working well? and more.

What will result from this unique faculty collaboration? The goal is for faculty to design creative venues such that students recognize the connectivity of science and math to their major courses and their daily lives.



First-year learning community students perform a scientific assessment of the river ecology.

## Dear Stef

Do you have a question that you would like ITL to help you answer?

Please email your question to [ITL@uakron.edu](mailto:ITL@uakron.edu). We will post one lucky question with a response in our next newsletter!

## We Want Your Feedback!

ITL is here to help you. If you have any comments or suggestions for how we may continue fulfilling our mission, please do not hesitate to contact us.

## Contact Us

Visit... [www.uakron.edu/itl](http://www.uakron.edu/itl)

Stop by... Leigh Hall, Room 412

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