Fall Convocation

Appalachian State University’s 25th annual convocation was held on Thursday, September 6, 2012 at 10:00 a.m. in the George M. Holmes Convocation Center. The featured address was given by Novella Carpenter, author of the summer reading book *Farm City: The Education of an Urban Farmer.*
Critical Thinking about First Year Seminar

For two days this past May, new and seasoned faculty had the opportunity to delve deeply into the world of critical thinking. During the First Year Seminar faculty retreat, participants assessed sample student assignments and honed their ability to recognize evidence of critical thinking skills in students’ work.

Through this and other activities, faculty enjoyed having lively conversations and sharing innovative teaching practices. As one participant remarked, “it was a great pleasure to spend time with such a variety of faculty from a variety of disciplines. I was heartened by the commitment and enjoyed listening to the discussions.” Another participant commented that, “while it is difficult to find the time for a 2-day seminar, I really appreciate the ‘forced’ focus on my class and developing it. I’m really glad this is offered!”

Michael Krenn and Elaine Gray, coordinators of the retreat, are excited to provide workshops that meet the needs of First Year Seminar faculty. For individuals who missed this summer retreat or are hoping to expand upon their knowledge base, there will be two workshops offered this semester addressing “Critical Thinking Across the Discipline.” Learning objectives of this workshop include being able to prepare students for the tasks of critical thinking, design effective critical thinking activities and assignments, and model critical thinking in the classroom.

For more information, see the list of workshops below.

Fall Workshops

Designing Effective Research Assignments - Looking for more “research” in your students’ research assignments? This workshop will provide insight into how students find and use information in the digital age. Participants will learn tips and strategies for creating research assignments that integrate information literacy and critical thinking skills. Located in Room 028 Belk Library & Information Commons. Facilitated by: Kelly Rhodes McBride and Amanda Bird.

Offered on: Thursday, September 27, 10:00am-11:30 and Monday, October 1, 2:00pm-3:30pm
Registration and more information: http://www.workshops.appstate.edu/detail.aspx?key=659

Critical Thinking Across the Disciplines - This book group will consider Stephen Brookfield’s book Teaching for Critical Thinking. Brookfield’s comprehensive exploration of teaching strategies, techniques, and classroom activities for critical thinking provides methods, models, and context for questioning assumptions from the perspectives of self, students, and systems of knowledge. This book is of special interest to those who teach in the general education program and addresses General Education Goal One. Participants will receive a copy of Brookfield’s book at the first session, and must commit to attending both sessions. Located in 1028 Anne Belk Hall. Facilitated by Elaine Gray, General Education.

Offered on: Sept 26th 12pm - 1:30pm and Oct 17th 12pm - 1:30pm
Registration and more information: http://www.workshops.appstate.edu/detail.aspx?key=730

General Education Council Meeting

The General Education Council will meet this Friday, September 14 at 3:00 in the McCrae Peak room of the Plemmons Student Union. Among the agenda items will be a discussion of the General Education Advisory Group recommendations for changes to the General Education Program. The full agenda can be found at: http://generaleducation.appstate.edu/general-education-council. This and all Council meetings are open to the public.
This unique course is strengthened by the partnership between three professors with distinctly different backgrounds. Their team cohesion allows for a deeper and more interdisciplinary exploration of class themes. As part of their communication with people from other cultures, students address questions and issues pertaining to food systems, college, family, success, and images/stereotypes. Classroom discussions have incorporated topics from the summer reading selection, Farm City.

Dr. Miller, Dr. Carey and Dr. Dubino meet weekly to plan future classes, but plan their course structure so that the class experience can be very spontaneous and organic. The class is more student-centered than professor-directed, allowing freshmen to develop greater agency and focus on the shared process of inquiry with individuals from other cultures. Students in UCO 1200 have far exceeded their professors’ expectations. These students have thrived in an environment where they are made to feel special and given a sense of agency in their own learning process. The success of this class illustrates the importance of continuing to offer these types of exciting opportunities for students.

Faculty Summer Grant Work

In Summer 2012, the General Education Program provided over ninety faculty members with grants to develop learning outcomes and curricula for their general education courses.

More than twenty teams of faculty received Shared Learning Outcome grants. Each team wrote a set of learning outcomes that every section of their general education course will be able to address. Each of the learning outcomes they crafted is directly related to at least one of the four goals of the General Education Program. These faculty members’ work is the first step in a larger process of revising the learning outcomes of the General Education Program so they more accurately reflect the general education curriculum our campus has developed.

Six additional teams of faculty received Curriculum Development grants. These teams developed materials, methods, content modules and/or assignments that address at least one of the four goals of the General Education Program.

To learn more about these grants and see samples of the work faculty participants produced, visit: http://generaleducation.appstate.edu/2012-summer-grant-reports.
Half of the students in Lillian Goudas’ UCO 1200 class “Art, Religion & Society” are clambering over an orange mountain of sweet potatoes. A dozen yards away, the other half of her class is fastidiously plucking ripe tomatoes and peppers from the vine. The air smells of dirt, potatoes, and excitement as Goudas’ class spends their afternoon volunteering in the Lenoir Unity Park and Community Garden.

Inspired by the summer reading book, *Farm City*, Goudas wanted to show students that they have the power to make an impact in the world right now; they don’t have to wait until they’ve earned a college degree to have something to offer. Goudas hopes that - unlike Winston Churchill, who believed that his “education was interrupted only by my schooling” - her students will be able to blur the lines between a college education and hands-on experience.

After overcoming their fears of touching rotten potatoes, the students started really digging in to the pile. “It’s hard work, you’ve got to throw caution to the wind and just trust yourself,” remarked student Courtney Russ in regards to determining the fate of a potato - dinner table or compost pile. Lenoir City community garden, delighted to have ASU students taking time out of their day to volunteer. He emphasized that this was an hour of filling plastic grocery bags with to the local Yokefellow Food Pantry.

The class will continue their involvement students design an educational mural to with the Lenoir Elementary School. Food schools where 80% of students are on free produce to food pantries like Yokefellow, can eat well regardless of their means.

Lenoir, NC, is known for having more public sculptures per capita than any other community of its size in the United States. UCO 1200 students really became part of the Lenoir family when they took part in a dedication ceremony of the newest addition to Lenoir’s sculpture collection, an earthcast sculpture by world-renowned artist Thomas Sayre. Following the dedication speeches, UCO 1200 students held hands with children, elected officials, and community members as they formed a line and danced through circular sculpture. “I felt as if the circle brought the community together as a whole,” observed student Kylil Martin, “There are many different varieties of people in Lenoir, and for them to come together in the name of art is remarkable.”

Following the dedication ceremony, students were given a tour of Lenoir’s public art by local artist Charle Frye. He invited the class into his studio, walked them down city streets, and even took them inside the Saint James church to view a set of famous paintings by Johannes Oertel. “This is something you usually see in an art museum, but it’s like, right here!” exclaimed Haley Mcguinn. Student Aaron Deshields admitted that he initially came to Lenoir with the misconception that it was a backwoods area, but he quickly realized that he was wrong. Growing up in Charlotte, he was impressed how “Lenoir is years ahead of most other cities in how their whole community comes together to support the arts.”

After their day of volunteering in Lenoir, Gouda’s class community came together to celebrate over food. David Horn, Vice President of hospital operations at Caldwell Memorial Hospital, joined with Lane Bailey to throw a pizza party for Goudas and her students. The pizzas—with names like “The Chicken Wrestler” and “The Zeus”—included goat cheese from a local farm and tomatoes from the community garden. David Horn prepared the pizzas using his own wood-fire outdoor pizza oven. It was a full, satisfying day that this group of First Year Seminar students will remember for many years to come.