FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

By Haley Vickers

This month’s spotlight faculty member is Dr. Nicholas Jacob from the Math Department. Dr. Jacob started at ECU August 2013, just one month after finishing his PhD in math.

Q: Why did you become a teacher?

A: I don’t consider myself a teacher, but a professor. I see the role as a professor to be quite different from being a teacher.

Q: How so?

A: Research is the biggest difference. It is not enough to know what you know; you need to be learning all the time!

Q: Growing up, what did you want to be?

A: A professional student! I think I have achieved this. After all, I do get paid to come to school each day.

Q: Going back to research, what are your research interests?

A: My thesis was all about statistical mechanics and a clever way to count things. Recently, I have been very interested in data analysis. It is such a dynamic topic right now, running on pretty much everything on the internet right now with Facebook and Google calling themselves data companies.

Q: Let’s talk about some other aspects of your job. What do you find to be the most rewarding part of being a professor?

A: Seeing a struggling student finally get it!

Q: What is the most challenging aspect?

A: Not getting upset when things don’t work out. Whether it is research or a student assignment, it is really hard for me to watch something fail.

Q: What is the most helpful advice you’ve received on your journey?
A: Make school your 9 to 5. I really enjoy my down time. It gives me a chance to recharge each night and shed the stress of the day.

Q: What’s your favorite lesson or activity to teach?

A: The tangent and cotangent dance! It’s a shuffle to the right and swap one arm up to down and vice versa.

Q: What’s your favorite tech tool for teaching?

A: WeBWorK. It’s an Online Educational Resource (OER) homework system for stats, college algebra, trigonometry, calculus, differential equations, applied stats, and more. Almost the entire math department is using it. I am the admin.

Q: What do students think of it?

A: Students are not terribly excited by it, but it saves them almost $100 for a comparable product and still gives them the advantage of checking their solutions immediately.

Q: CETL is starting a reading initiative, so I’m asking everyone, “What was the last book you read?”

A: The Curse of Bigness, a book about antitrust in the digital age. It advocates for the breakup of the tech giants!

HOW DOES LEARNING HOUSE AFFECT ME?

By Wendy McKibben & Haley Vickers

In this section, CETL will try to answer your most burning questions regarding The Learning House (TLH).

1. How will the TLH process work? How is it different from what ECU does now?
   - Each course will have a pristine master shell that an ECU faculty member has created with a TLH instructional designer. That master shell will then be copied over into a LIVE shell in which the instructor teaching that course can add and delete materials as they deem fit for their particular group of students.

2. Will there be a new template for shells? If so, will it look different?
   - Yes, there will be a new template, but it is based on the Quality Matters template that CETL created. This new ECU-branded
template will be streamlined, making it very beneficial for students as all courses will look and navigate the same.

3. **If I add content to my LIVE shell, will those materials be lost when the semester is over?**
   - You can add content to your LIVE shell and archive those shells when the semester is over. However, the Blackboard (BB) Team is working to deploy Content Collection so faculty can use folders to house all materials they add to a course. The collection will be available every semester to faculty and can be accessed at any time.

4. **Will I still be able to copy materials from my old courses?**
   - At this time, the BB Team will leave all courses on the SaaS environment, so, yes, faculty can copy materials from old Blackboard shells.

5. **Will TLH representatives be in my Blackboard shells?**
   - TLH reps will be in your LIVE BB shells. They will be there to support you with any technical issues you may experience and to assist TLH students.

6. **Can I still request development shells?**
   - Absolutely! Just contact the HelpDesk with your request.

7. **Can we still share shell contents (with permission, of course!)?**
   - Yes! Continue to put in HelpDesk tickets for permissioning requests.

8. **Will CETL still help me if I have questions?**
   - Your TLH Instructional Designer will be there to answer all of your questions regarding the TLH-Blackboard environment. For all face-to-face, blended, or non-TLH online instructional questions, please contact us! CETL is happy to help.

For any further questions, feel free to contact CETL at x521 or x844 or visit us in Admin 213.

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**SERVING STUDENTS THROUGH THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES: PART IV**

By Haley Vickers

In past issues, we (re)introduced you to Chickering and Gamson’s 1987 article, “Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education” and to Principles #1-#3. This month, we will be looking at Principle #4 on feedback.

**Principle #4 of Good Practice: Gives Prompt Feedback**

There’s a lot to unpack in Principle 4. There can be no feedback without assessment, so let’s begin there. When one hears the word *assessment*, the immediate reaction is to see a classroom full of students taking an exam, but actually, a test is just one type of assessment. Assessments come in all shapes and sizes. In fact, we humans are assessing everything around us each and every day. When I get up in the morning, I check the weather app on my phone, and I determine from that assessment what I should wear for the day. When I go to the
grocery store, I look at essentially the same product, marketed and sold by five different companies, and I choose the one that brings me the most value. In the same strain, when I read a student’s paper, I am assessing if s/he followed the prompt, used Standard American writing conventions, correctly included APA citations, etc., but it is what I do with this assessment that really counts.

Sometimes both professors and students get caught up in the letter grade or the numerical score and forget what assessment and feedback are all about: learning. The reason teachers give tests or assign portfolios or require discussion boards is to know A) what the student understands or does not understand from the course objectives and B) to help the instructor give timely, relevant, and appropriate feedback to that student.

Not all assessments have to be formal and not all feedback has to take hours and hours for the professor to grade and mark. For instance, most foreign language teachers can walk into a classroom and know in 15 minute’s time their students’ language-levels. There was no exam on irregular past tense or future perfect, but the teacher was still able to identify where the students are and what they need to continue to learn. In the same way, a simple exit slip at the end of class can tell a teacher what the student (mis)understood from that day’s lecture, and there was no grading involved. The feedback in this instance would be to reach out to those students who did not understand or to re-teach that material again.

In other instances, it is appropriate to give copious amounts of feedback, but it is important to give this feedback in such a way that is timely, relevant, and appropriate.

Let’s begin with timely. Students need to know their mistakes if they are ever going to learn from them, and students are more likely to remember what they missed on the test the faster the graded tests are returned to them. A week or less is ideal for students to receive feedback on a formal test or assignment.

Feedback should also be relevant. If I am teaching an introductory-level class, I should not expect my students to understand the material at a junior-level. I need to include feedback that is on-level for their current understanding—not way over their heads. (But not too easy, either. Ideally, instruction should be at the $i+1$ level.)

Additionally, feedback needs to be appropriate. I should praise what a student did well, correct what a student did wrong, and model what I would like to see in the future.

Finally, feedback should be appropriate. In other words, a letter grade on a 15-page paper is not

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1 For more information about this concept, see Krashen’s input hypothesis or Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development.
enough feedback from an instructor. The professor needs to give her student comments throughout the paper, showing the student that his work is valuable.

But how does one professor give appropriate, timely, and relevant feedback for a class of 40? One of the easiest ways is to create rubrics. Good rubrics take some time to develop. They also take time to vet and edit, but once the rubric is in tip-top shape, it helps the professor cut down on marking every little thing in the paper that the student did right or wrong. Rubrics also help the students to know what the professor is expecting, how to earn the grade they desire, and what needs to be worked on for future evaluation.

Another way to cut out some of the professor’s grading work is to have students peer review each other’s work before it is ever submitted to the instructor. This can be done in a face-to-face classroom as well as online.

An activity I had success with was Peer Review Speed Dating. Instead of the boring humdrum, “we’re going to read each other’s papers now,” there was an element of surprise when the students came in and realized that they were going to communicate with at least 3 of their peers that class period. The first “speed date” would read for content. “Is there a thesis? Where? Are the main points supported?” Etc. The second “speed date” would read for APA or MLA style. “Is everything formatted correctly? Perhaps a citation should be added here.” Finally, the third “date” would read for grammar and understanding. “I don’t understand what you’re trying to say here, and no comma needed before because.” I found that this activity also lessened the cognitive load of the students because they no longer had to read the paper and look for all mistakes. They only had to focus on one area at a time.

The last way to help reduce the grading load on the professor is to ask students to reflect on their own assignments. I have had students give presentations in class and afterwards assign themselves a grade... but they had to provide logical evidence to support why that grade should be recorded. Not all students took it seriously, but it was a way for me to dialogue with my students about their performance and mastery of the content and ask them critical questions about their work.

Assessment and feedback are so important for both the instructor and the student. If you want to brainstorm some ways to spice up your assessments or feedback, give CETL a call. We are always happy to help!

BLACKBOARD TIP OF THE MONTH:

By Wendy McKibben

New Box in Blackboard

New Box View recently had a rollback to an early release in Blackboard. Below are some current issues/tips and workarounds to bugs that are being fixed:
1. **Highlight Tool:** When the resolution is low (below 1600*1200), the browser window is zoomed in or not maximized, the highlight tool disappears.
   a. Resolution Timeline: TBD
   b. Workaround: See silent video [here](#).
2. **Drawings:** Once you have added a drawing, the delete tool is missing
   a. Resolution Timeline: TBD
   b. Workaround: Submit the assignment to save changes, then go back into the attempt, expand the iframe and **THEN** you can select drawings to delete them
3. **Comments:** When adding comments, the cursor doesn’t automatically appear in the “write a comment” text box
   a. Resolution Timeline: TBD
   b. In order to make a comment, you will need to click inside the comment box to begin typing feedback at this time
4. **No hardware stylus functions properly**
   a. Resolution Timeline: TBD
   b. Box iPad pencil broken by update
   c. Assignment Annotation on Microsoft Surface with Pen not working
   d. Users are unable to successfully post a comment with New Box View Inline Grading Feature on Touchscreen Devices
5. **Comment Box Panel**
   a. Some of the panel is at the top of the screen and others are at the bottom

At this time Blackboard is working with New Box to implement a resolution.

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**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

By Haley Vickers

UCO is hosting the 2019 **Transformative Learning Conference.** This event will take place on March 13th and 14th and will be held at the Embassy Suites OKC Downtown. Click [here](#) for registration information.

ABLE Tech is hosting the **TechAccessOK Conference** in Downtown Oklahoma City June 6 – 7 this year. This conference focuses on making technology accessible for all. Key presenters include Luis Garcia (eBay), Karen Hawkins (SapientRazorfish), Robert Jolley (Knowbility), Christa Miller (Virginia Tech), Korey Singleton (George Mason U), Jonathan Whiting (WebAIM), and more. Proposals are now being accepted and should be sent to Robb Carr. More details can be found [here](#).

**Smarthinking** is offering a free webinar about integrating tutoring support in online classes. The webinar is available Tuesday, March 26th at noon CST and Wednesday, March 27th at 2:00 pm CST. Click here to [register](#).

The Council for Online Learning Excellence (COLE) is hosting the **Learning Innovations Summit** April 1-12. This conference is completely online and free, with sessions being recorded. If you would like to attend, register [here](#).
Quality Matters
All Stars
QM Internal Reviews MET:
- Dr. Marc Petrowsky for SOC 2119
- Dr. Dustin Williams for EDPSY 5533
- Dr. Darcy Tessman for FCS 1523

CONGRATULATIONS ON A JOB WELL DONE!