HIV and AIDS Educational Programs Funded by Grants from the Association of American Colleges and Universities

by Marie D. York
(Director, Health Education Institute)

"One out of 240 people in Maryland is infected with HIV or AIDS. This would fill half of Camden Yards. More individuals have died of AIDS than all motor vehicle accidents in Maryland since 1981. Every 4 hours another Marylander is infected . . . . We are standing at the beginning of a stream that is moving away from us faster than we can catch up . . . . We are a small state with a very big problem." Excerpt from presentation by Dr. Liza Solomon, Director, AIDS Administration, HIV/AIDS Summit 2000

Prince George's County has the second highest number of people infected with HIV in the state of Maryland. In Maryland, the counties that are most affected by HIV and AIDS are, in order of magnitude: Baltimore City, Prince George's County and Montgomery County. This may sound rather dramatic. It bears repeating that we are one community trying to figure out what to do with such a far-reaching health crisis. Prince George's County is second only to Baltimore City in the number of people infected with HIV and AIDS.

Statistics such as these set the tone for the experiences of a remarkable set of grants funded by the Association of American Colleges and Universities and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and awarded to Prince George's Community College during Spring 1999 and Fall 2000 Semesters. With a modest amount of funding, the college set out to heighten the public concern.

As reported by the World Health Organization, approximately 53 million individuals have been infected with HIV worldwide. Of the 53 million, 19 million men, women and children have died. The destiny of Africa matters. What will it take to convince us that the fate of Africa is our fate. In the United States treatment is delaying the onset of AIDS. However, the number of new HIV infections each year continues to rise.

In Maryland approximately 2,000 new HIV infections have been reported each year and the number of new infections continues to rise. As of September 30, 1999, there were 12,111 known cases of HIV who had not yet developed AIDS. Combined with the 9,100 living with AIDS cases, there are over 21,000 Marylanders living with HIV or AIDS.

**Project Abstracts**

HIV/AIDS: A Concern for All of Us

In the spring of 1999, Prince George's Community College provided free, public evening presentations on the epidemic of HIV and AIDS. Lectures were presented by community leaders and experts in epidemiology and treatment. The lecture series concluded with a candle-lighting ceremony

With the college 's international students representing their countries of origin and respective plight of AIDS. Each participating student, dressed in authentic costume, carried a lighted candle and entered a darkened Rennie Forum proceeding to the stage where each announced the name of their country as they placed the candle in memory for all those who had died of AIDS. The success of this grant led to the funding for the Summit 2000 project.
HIV/AIDS Summit 2000

The HIV/AIDS Summit was held on November 30, 2000. Over 180 community leaders, faculty, health care providers, parents and students attended the day-long forum to listen, learn and discuss vital questions with a panel of experts on the epidemic of HIV and AIDS. A summary of the discussions and recommendations was prepared and disseminated to all attendees, community leaders and parent-teacher organizations.

The Proceedings and Recommendations drafted from the HIV/AIDS Summit are available in the office of the Health Education Institute, Chesapeake Hall 108. Included in this summary document are substantial excerpts from the provocative and thoughtful presentations delivered by Dr. Liza Solomon, Director of the AIDS Administration of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene for the state of Maryland and the forwarded remarks of Mr. Barton Gellman, Washington Post staff writer with the New York Bureau.

As a community, we must find new ways to be advocates for change, to do more and to be more fervent in our efforts aimed at awareness and prevention. The success of these projects should not end with the close of the program. We are responsible for our community.

Kathleen Linville and Marie York, Co-Principal Investigators on the grants, extend sincere appreciation to the planning committee, participants, the college administration, faculty and staff.

Learning on the Road: A Multicultural Visit to Philadelphia

by Elizabeth Holden
(Associate Professor, Language Studies)

Kaleidoscope Club took learning on the road this spring break. Forty-three students joined faculty Sherry Kinslow (Psychology), Elaine Kass (Speech Communications), Inga Conradt and Elizabeth Holden (Language Studies) for a day of exploration on April 5, 2001. The group formed a caravan of vans and cars to visit some of the historical landmarks of Philadelphia, and the much newer Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies.

The group visited both traditional historic sites and an alternative museum of history. At the Liberty Bell Pavilion, a National Park Services guide made a brief presentation about the role of the Liberty Bell as a national symbol. After the presentation, students were able to pose individual questions. The students seemed impressed by the heft of the bell as well as by its important role in the quest for independence of the revolutionary period, and later for the abolitionists. Independence Hall also gave the students the feel for the eras in which the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution were ratified. The tours provided experiential learning for the international students who were learning American history, many of them for the first time.

While the history of immigration is an essential force in American history, it is not the first aspect one thinks of when visiting Philadelphia. The itinerary, designed by a Kaleidoscope student leader, also included a tour of the Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies, a research library and museum dedicated to Philadelphia’s past and current immigrant communities. A curator addressed the students and circulated a Bill of Sale of a young female slave, the diploma of one of the first female college graduates, and a sign circa 1915 with anti-Irish hiring practices. Through these
artifacts, she wove stories of the travails and successes of forced immigrants (slaves), the Irish, and the Chinese. The students toured two exhibits there: a collection of political cartoons from the early 20th century and photographs documenting the lives of refugees in New York. The museum staff also shared an outreach project that is being developed to disseminate information pertinent to Philadelphia’s African immigrant community and asked the students for input.

For many students, all three sites provided the students with a way to put their personal experiences into a historical and cultural context.

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**The First Class and Thereafter**

by Barbara Miller  
(Adjunct Faculty, English & Philosophy)

(Some common-sense suggestions on how to handle that all-too-important first class.)

The first day of class is the most important class, because it sets the tone for the rest of the semester. It provides vital information to the students on the expectations of the teacher and what is required of them. It gives the students an idea of the depth, extent, and the importance of the material that will be covered in the course. The first day, also, provides the students with a definite idea of the course requirements, grading system, attendance policy, and how they can help themselves pass the course with flying colors. (After all, is this not the dream of every student?)

I have been teaching for more than twenty years and realize that I have come a long way from the novice days as a teaching assistant. In my tender youthful years, I not only lacked the experience, know-how, and extensive knowledge that I admired in my professors, but in many cases even my students were much older than I and wore the badge of life experience that I lacked. Even so, time and experience has been my best teacher. I now face my first day of class, and the rest of the semester, with great enthusiasm, optimism, and confidence, which I also infuse in my students along the way.

This is the procedure I follow on the first day of class:

1) In a paragraph, I ask the students to write down their name, their major field of study (if they have one), their class standing (freshman, etc.), and their reason for taking the course. In many cases they are taking the course to fulfill a prerequisite. In another paragraph, I ask the students to tell me a little about themselves, their hobbies, their jobs, sports activities, or other favorite pastimes. This method enables me to learn their names quickly, to know their individual standings, their drives, and their preferences. This technique gives me a good profile of my class, and enlightens me on their expectations of the course and its importance in their curriculum. This process also allows me to check on their progress later on in the semester, and to incorporate their job training procedures and ideas into their written assignments.

2) I give the students a syllabus with the assignment for each class, dates of scheduled tests, and the grading system I intend to use for the course. The students are never left in the dark about this point. I clearly indicate when all papers, work assignments, or other group activities are due and what is expected for each class. Most importantly, I stick to the syllabus religiously.
3) I establish ground rules for the class. I indicate clearly both in the syllabus and reiterate what I expect from students in terms of their behavior, their performance in class, their attendance, their homework assignments, and the penalties for late papers. I let them know what they can expect from me in terms of my time, my office hours, and the extent to which I can assist them.

4) I always give a full lecture to set the tone of my method, organization, and directions for them to follow, because time is precious. This first lecture also gives the students an idea of my style and what is expected of them throughout the semester. During the lecture, I point out that good study habits will ensure success. I keep in mind that many of these students may be freshmen, or that this may be their first college class. I impress upon them not to wait until the night before an exam to open their textbooks or read their notes. Only a review should be necessary the night before the exam.

5) Finally, if time permits I give them a diagnostic essay, or do some basic grammar work using the blackboard, involving the whole class in the activity. This activity also emphasizes the importance of good grammar usage in their work. In the event that I cannot give the students a diagnostic essay, I use their class introduction paragraphs for diagnosing their writing skills.

Having concluded a busy, well-organized, and enjoyable first class, I use the following methods throughout the remainder of the term. This ensures continued success.

1) I divide each class period into two parts. I always start with a review of the last class. This helps students know where we are. It enables those who missed the last class to catch up. Reviewing puts me in a proper frame of mind to move smoothly into the prepared lecture in the second part of the period.

2) During the lecture, I select one or two students to call upon to respond to my questions. Serious students never like to be inattentive in front of their peers. The process helps me to screen out those students who are habitually unprepared for class. Further, this method helps me draw out certain problems students may have. Then, to, it generates a healthy dialogue with the instructor and the students in class.

3) While it is not possible to cover everything, it is imperative to explain the test and cover as much of the assigned materials as possible. This lays the foundation for the students, demonstrates how much work there is, and enables them to continue their study with greater ease and comprehension. Also, I have learned to anticipate students’ questions and difficulties. Since certain problems perpetually crop up, I can incorporate this in my lecture material beforehand to facilitate learning.

4) Most recently I have developed PowerPoint presentations to emphasize the important points that students should know.

5) I try to tie in textbook examples with current issues in order to make the material current, relevant, and to make class discussions lively. This helps to bring the real world to the students, not some bygone era.

6) I make a point to read the homework and the term papers as carefully as possible, making corrections and notations. This is more acceptable than a grade or comment at the end of the paper. It saves me time and helps the students catch their mistakes.

7) Not all lectures go according to plan. Let the students know where you stopped and what is expected next class period. For constructive self-improvement, I analyze to see why the lecture did not go as planned. Perhaps there was too much material for the student to comprehend or my expectations were too high.
8) Lastly, I leave as much time as possible to accommodate students. Students’ needs do not always relate to class material. However, they are people trying very hard to accomplish what I have prepared for them. Students also need help and additional guidance. I believe it is imperative to make the student the center of our universe.

Reasoning Across the Curriculum

by William Peirce
(Coordinator)

The RAC website has great material for you!
http://academic.pg.cc.md.us/~wpeirce/MCCCTR

The RAC website is shared with the Maryland Community College Consortium for Teaching Reasoning. When you reach the website, click on "Documents from Prince George's Community College." The site contains articles, workshop handouts, lists of books on teaching thinking (including publishers' URLs and telephone numbers), links to other web sites on teaching thinking, URLs for students writing argumentative papers, and more.

It’s been mentioned admiringly on several higher education faculty e-discussion lists, noted as a useful resource at college workshops across the country on teaching critical thinking, and has received more than 6000 visitors since 1998. There’s something useful there for you too.

Recent additions or revisions to the collection of articles include teaching thinking online and understanding how learning styles explain students’ difficulties in thinking.

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BARRIERS TO SUCCESS: STUDENT VIEWS ON INFLUENTIAL FACTORS

At the beginning of Spring 2001 Semester at Prince George’s Community College, some faculty members in the Division of English and Humanities and in the Department of Career Assessment and Planning volunteered to ask their students to provide input for this study, sponsored by Communication Across the Curriculum. Students were asked two questions:

1. Please describe a situation you have experienced as a college student that caused you to feel excluded or disengaged from the class you were taking. (If you are new to college, write about a high school situation.) What happened? How do you feel about that situation now? What were the effects for you of this situation?

2. What did the instructor do, OR what could the instructor have done, to help you?

The purpose of this study is NOT to point a finger at poor teaching practices at PGCC. Many students wrote descriptions of supportive and helpful faculty at the college. And many described barriers that were not imposed by the teacher.

The project’s purpose was to understand students’ perspectives of what factors in their college experiences could be so deflating that they deny them confidence in their ability to be successful. Indeed, some students linked the experiences they described to decisions to drop classes and sometimes to drop out of college at that time.

To understand the students’ responses from their perspective, I did not preconceive of categories of responses. I created categories out of the data itself, using the students’ language. I collapsed categories only when it was very apparent that different phrases had the same meaning.

DISCUSSION OF SOME HIGHLIGHTS FROM DATA

The following are the five most frequently mentioned issues:

A. Students’ own self-imposed barriers were indicated in a total of 85 responses. Students looked back to recognize that they were unprepared or unmotivated to achieve when academic troubles occurred. Sometimes problems with family, work, or health intruded into their school plans.

B. The most frequent single statement from students (43) was that the teacher they were describing was “not helpful.” Sometimes that involved not adapting or responding to students’ messages of confusion, not taking any questions in class, or not waiting to include those who didn’t “get it” right away. This topic suggests that students’ needs were not matched by faculty members’ communication. That could imply that instructors were not reading feedback from students accurately, were not adapting to that feedback, or were moving on with part of the class, leaving others behind.
After reading these responses as a group, I find that they suggest that those students want teachers to take an interest in them as people, to talk with them even if they aren’t the people who routinely put their hands up, and to try to understand their confusions. It reminds us that community college students sometimes need to feel very supported in order to feel safe in the classroom. It places a priority on teaching students, not just content.

An example of a problem was:

“...I feel the instructor could have asked us questions to gain an insight on our views to see what we know, or have learned. It seemed like she was having a party with herself and no one else was invited.”

Examples of effective responses were offered:

“In this situation the instructor is very good to me. She tell[s] me that if I do not understand something I can ask her and she will explain [it] to me again more slowly and using easier words.”

“I went back to see her after class and enjoined her to please explain the lab to me over again. She took her time with me! ...which helped my understanding of the lab topic a great deal!”

C. The second most common response was that the teacher insulted them (32). Some of these descriptions indicated personal pain, including feeling belittled when a teacher would not take a question, or would insult the nature of a question. Also several wrote of wishing a negative comment the instructor made about their poor individual performance had been said in private, not in front of the class. Some comments reported to have been stated by instructors were offensive and sarcastic. This topic focuses on the need student have to receive a feeling of respect from their teachers.

Examples:

"I didn’t understand why I received a “B” in a course, so I e-mailed the professor. He replied, ‘I don’t understand how you got that grade either, probably as a Christmas present. If you want to come in to see it, it’ll become a “C.”’"

“She never took questions. Whenever someone would raise their hand, she would reprimand them as if they were being disruptive. Only at the last five minutes of class would she even consider it. By the time the last five minutes came, there would be more questions than time to answer.”

“I said, ‘I don’t know.’ His final comment was, ‘I think some people need to try flipping burgers at Wendy’s for a couple years to see what the real world is like.’...It felt like my motivation of going to college and making something of myself was stripped from me.”

D. Students’ comfort levels are addressed by the fact that, in describing their own feelings, seven people said that they felt fearful in class, six were hesitant to speak, and nine felt out of place or alone. Such comments are helpful reminders that faculty feel in charge of their classrooms, but need to remember that students may not feel safe. I also think it is important that fifteen wrote of other students being disruptive or distracting in the classroom, eleven said they had been insulted by other students, and four felt rejected by other students. Monitoring the climate in the classroom is a task which faculty should continually address. We should give more attention to ways in which faculty can help students feel secure in taking risks in their learning environment.

An example of student fear:
“I got depressed one time in math because I was not passing it, so I decided to withdraw from the class, and drop out of college. I felt so sorry for myself, and embarrassed that I didn’t tell her my problem. She knew, but I didn’t ask for help.”

E. Nineteen students discussed the fast pace of their classes; there was clearly a mismatch between the students’ expectations and the reality of the class.

I received and have tabulated 480 responses from students. This includes 75 in which students described only successes, indicating they had no real barriers in their college experience. Certainly other students did not fill out the form for that same reason; the total number of students in the sample with no barriers should be understood to be even higher than 75. A total of 389 student barriers essays were coded; not all experiences happened at PGCC. Some students indicated multiple issues in their short essays, so there are more than 389 responses on the tabulated list.

The following are the categories of responses tabulated:

Teacher issues
Subject matter issues
The student’s own issues
The classroom issues/ physical space
Classroom distractions from other students
Counseling issues
Financial aid issues
International student testing/placement
Class being full; being closed out of a course

We will continue to run focus groups on these issues and to analyze this data.

If you would like to bring a student and participate in a focus group discussion of this topic in fall 2001, please contact Marlene Cohen, 301-322-0177, cohenmx@pg.cc.md.us.

Writing Across the Curriculum

by Anne Mills King
(Coordinator)

A VERY SPECIAL RECEPTION

Finding our former students everywhere, often doing surprising things, is not rare. Yet I did not expect to encounter one in the Governor’s Reception Room in the State House in Annapolis, below the staid photos of Maryland's former governors.

Margaret Schmidt was one of the four winners in the Women of Achievement Contest sponsored by Maryland.com, a think tank promoting Maryland in business, tourism, and communications. The awards were presented in Annapolis on Wednesday April 5 by Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, Maryland's Lieutenant Governor. I was one of
seven judges who picked winners from a list, with biographies, of women who had been nominated for this award. I did not think I knew any of them, but at the reception when I congratulated one of them, Margaret Schmidt, on her award, she burst out "I believe you were my English teacher!" At 17, in 1970, she was in one of my classes, and remembered "You taught me how to write!" That was also my first year at PGCC, so meeting her again in such surroundings was both pleasure and reward for me.

I did vote for her, unknowing, since I knew her as young Margaret Wall in a composition class. Margaret’s career since then has been distinguished: Nurse Anesthetist at Providence Hospital, Major and Flight Nurse in the Air Force Reserve, serving in the 459th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron at Andrews Air Force Base. She is an instructor in Chemical, Biological, and Nuclear warfare, and has presented on a worldwide satellite conference in the management of biological weapons casualties. More than that, she has helped people all over the world, serving five times on a hospital ship off the coast of West Africa, volunteering both her time and her travel. As a personal achievement, she completed the Marine Corps Marathon four years in a row. Any teacher would be proud of her; this one is!

A FEW GOOD WORDS

This is the seventeenth year of publication for the Instructional Forum, and it takes more than news to make a newsletter. It takes good words written by good writers. In appreciation, the Instructional Forum takes this space to thank the following writers who contributed their good words to 2000-2001 Volume 16.

Dale Ash (Speech/Theatre), Mary Brown (Book Bridge), Catherine Cant (Mathematics), Marlene Cohen (CAC), Diane Finley (Psychology), Marianne Grayston (Language Studies), Robin Hailstorks (Psychology), Sherry Kinslow (Psychology), Anne Mills King (WAC), Roxann King (Educational Development), Barry McCollough (Educational Development), Barbara Miller (English/Philosophy), Bill Peirce (RAC), Wendy Perkins (Honors), Marilyn Pugh (Economics), Barbara Sanders (Counseling), Edwin Sapp (English), Yvonne Seon (History), Mary Helen Spear (Psychology), Robert Spear (CIS), Verna Teasdale (Instruction), Bobbie Walton Vess (Radiography), Ronald Williams (President), Imogene Zachery (Library), Vera Zdravkovich (Instruction).

Special thanks to the production staff consisting of Bob Jones and Kent Hunter (Duplicating), Sue Gillett and Joan Gilman (Instruction), and Catherine Sinex -- a big thanks for their prompt, professional, and always pleasant service.
May

10-13  SPUNK
& Three stories presented by Metropolitan Ebony Theatre (MET) at the Hallam Theater
17-20  Call 301-322-0621 for information.

14  MUSIC STUDENTS CONCERT CHOIR PERFORMANCE
Call 301-322-0955 for information.

15-21  FINAL EXAMS

23  FINAL GRADES DUE AT 12 NOON

26-28  COLLEGE CLOSED - MEMORIAL DAY HOLIDAY

31  COMMENCEMENT

June

4  SUMMER SESSION I BEGINS