Center for Teaching Excellence
Hampton University
Teaching Matters

An Interview with the Provost Teaching Innovation Award Recipient

by Zina T. McGee

Each year, Hampton University honors and recognizes outstanding faculty who serve as models of excellence for their profession and exemplary mentors for their students. For this issue of the CTE Newsletter, I had the pleasure of interviewing the most recent recipient of the Provost Teaching Innovation Award: *Dr. Sharad Maheshwari, Department of Business Administration.*

Briefly describe your teaching philosophy. What strategies do you use to create a technologically enhanced student-focused learning environment? I can describe my teaching philosophy in one phrase, "student-participation." I like to teach my classes in a way where students have a chance to interact and to participate in the process. In my classes, technology is an integral part of the process. I design course material around available and pertinent technologies. In my teaching plan, I include from basic technology tools like Microsoft PowerPoint to advanced course-related software tools like Microsoft Project. I include, whenever possible, in-class, hands-on exercises on these technology tools, and course assignments and projects which utilize these tools. The main expectation is that students learn the necessary skills to use these technology tools to solve real-life business problems. **How do you recognize creativity and innovation both within and outside of the classroom setting?** I am always looking for new technology tools that can be used in class to either improve learning or to improve the efficiency of delivery of the course material, or both. I look for tools that can be easily used to explain a course-related concept. I only want to use technology which can enhance and support course material. For example, when teaching how to assess various financing options for a car, I use Microsoft Excel to simulate how changes in interest rate, pay-off period or loan amount will change the payment. Once explained and practiced in class, I want students to be able to do exercises to compare financing options themselves. I use BlackBoard extensively for distributing the material, announcements, grades, and other class-related items. To me, BlackBoard is a great tool to improve the efficiency of course delivery. It helps me to cut classroom management time and gives me more teaching time. To summarize, I am continually looking for technology tools which are easy to use and easy to incorporate into my teaching material and that I can be assured will be available for students to use. I am also willing to invest my time to learn any new skills necessary to incorporate a given tool. **In what way does technology help you to stimulate self-growth and professional development among your students?** I love information technology. It is gratifying to me whenever I am able to find and learn a new technology tool which can be incorporated into my

course material. I am also motivated by the fact that useful sets of technology skills are changing faster everyday; hence, I want to learn new technology whenever possible. I keep in touch with some of the former students just to get an idea as to what they use and how information technology is changing in the business. I try to change if I get the impression that whatever I am doing is not useful. For example, a few years back in one of my courses, I used to teach basic webpage development. I later got the impression from most students that real webpage design has become too technical (or canned) and is no longer very useful to every business student. I removed that material from the course. I constantly hear back (and want to hear back) from the students that part of my class work was very useful in their recent internship or job. To me, it is a testimony that I am helping my students in their professional development. **What strategies do you use to facilitate reflection, professional learning and enhanced student accomplishment through technology?** It is primarily achieved through the class work, projects and other assignments which utilize the technology tools. I do not mind when students complain about my class as "demanding" in terms of work. To me, classroom learning must be emphasized and re-emphasized to make sure that students can utilize some of the skills in the real-world setting without any help or supervision.

Announcements

The 2007 Blackboard Greenhouse Program. Blackboard recently announced the launch of the Blackboard Greenhouse Program for 2007, and the call for proposals has opened for all members of the Blackboard client community. Blackboard will provide up to three grants, each for $25,000, to initiatives which have been developed by members of the Blackboard community and deployed successfully, and which promote best practices in the adoption of Internet technology. Further information about the Blackboard Greenhouse Program is located at www.blackboard.com/greenhouse.

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Call for Entries. In the February 2007 issue of the CTE Newsletter, we will be featuring our first in a series of white papers written by our faculty across the campus. We encourage you to submit a brief article or white paper examining some aspect of teaching and learning, research and grantsmanship and/or technological instruction. We look forward to hearing from you. We will post a reminder in the next issue.