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An Interview with an Edward L. Hamm, Sr. Distinguished Teaching Award Recipient

By Zina T. McGee, Ph.D.

Each year, Hampton University honors and recognizes outstanding faculty who serve as models of excellence for their profession and exemplary mentors for their students. This month, I had the pleasure of interviewing one of the recent recipients of the Edward L. Hamm, Sr. Distinguished Teaching Award, Mr. Robert Watson, Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science and History, and Assistant to the Dean of the School of Liberal Arts.



Mr. Robert Watson

Briefly describe your teaching philosophy. What strategies do you use to create a student-focused learning environment?

My teaching philosophy is that every student is capable of learning the materials that I teach because I believe the material is relevant to the development of a holistic person. I use several strategies including individual assignments, group activities, and hands-on activities. I require that students read a variety of sources, including books, in order to gain an understanding of many subjects.

How do you recognize creativity and innovation both within and outside of the classroom setting?

I use our universal sites as text, such as the Peabody Collection, the University Museum, the Emancipation Oak, and both the campus cemetery and the Veterans cemetery. I also hold classes in front of the Booker T. Washington statue and the Emancipation Oak. Since Virginia has so many historic sites, I am able to take students to Jamestown-Yorktown, Colonial Williamsburg, the Newsome House, and the Fields House, as well as other sites that are relevant for broadening their horizons.

In what ways do you stimulate self-growth and professional development among your students?

I expose the students to all opportunities that are available, not only in their areas of study but also in other areas that they might not have given any thought. In other words, they are encouraged to “seize the moment” by listening to speakers who visit campus, as well as reading newspapers and journals, and paying attention to social media in order to know what is available for their self-growth and professional development.

What strategies do you use to facilitate reflection, professional learning and enhanced student accomplishment?

In addition to the strategies described previously, I have students write short, reflective papers, take tests, read, and listen to their peers and other professors.

The Benefits and Blessings of Using Guest Lecturers

By Karen Hughes Miller, Ph.D.

From FacultyFocus.Com

As we face the perpetual challenge of keeping each class session fresh and interactive, I suggest we consider an old idea that never really got stale. Inviting guest lecturers to your classroom has benefits for your learners, for you, and for the guest lecturers. Learners of all ages and experience levels are hungry for variety, and seeing a new face in front of the room can liven up the class; but there are also deeper pedagogical reasons for using guest lecturers. Here are a few to consider.

None of us is an expert on everything, so bringing in speakers with proven expertise in a topic provides added credibility to our content. These experts can be faculty from your institution (but perhaps outside of your department or school) or experts from the community. Van Hoek et al. (2011) found that in a course with profound practical applications, such as supply chain management, voices from the field seemed to carry as much or more credibility than those from the academic side.

Hearing new voices provides students not only with different points-of-view, but also with potential resources they can apply in later courses. For example, asking a research librarian to discuss effective literature search strategies before assigning a

research project gives students not only the "just in time" information but also some long-term skills. But a word of caution if you have students who are new to higher education (or a few whose motivation is a bit sub-par); make sure students understand that they are just as responsible for mastering content from guest lecturers as they are for mastering the content you provide. Guest lecturers are not substitute teachers.

Having a guest lecturer also opens your lesson design to new options. For example, you and your guest can work together to field questions or even debate issues. Let students apply their critical thinking to compare points of view.

When seeking guest lecturers for your course, do not be afraid to work "up" the academic ladder by inviting senior or tenured faculty. There could be benefits for all in this exchange.

Working with a guest lecturer

Like all guests, guest lecturers should be treated very well, especially if you want their help in future courses! Provide as much lead-time as possible so they can prepare and so you can share materials from your guest lecturer with your students. Willis (2013) found that the flipped classroom format could be used by guest faculty, but it was slightly less effective than when used by regular faculty (perhaps because it combines new materials and an unknown instructor). So allow more classroom time for review when using that teaching strategy with guests.

Be very clear with guest faculty about the content you want covered, the time and technology available, and the class size and composition. Determine who has which responsibilities, such as posting or printing handouts or other learning materials.

Formal letters of thanks are useful in the business world and the academic world. In the academic world, it is a good idea to copy the appropriate Dean or Department Chair when thanking faculty for their help.

When you're the guest lecturer

From a faculty point of view, being invited to guest lecture is a very nice addition to your CV. It is also a good opportunity to see how content from other courses relate to your own (i.e. Is my content redundant or reinforcing? Am I teaching my content at the right level?) When you are invited as a guest, make sure you know exactly what is expected in both content and logistics. If you rely on PowerPoint or Internet connectivity to present, make sure to confirm availability. (It's often easier to carry presentations on a zip drive rather than relying on connecting your laptop to someone else's projector.) If you plan to use handouts and the course has web support, provide that material ahead of time so it can be uploaded to the course site. If you welcome the idea of students contacting you for more information, put your email as a header or footer to the handouts where it will not be misplaced. No detail is too small when working in a new environment, and you don't want to lose momentum while you make adjustments to your technology as students wait.

Higher education today embraces the ideas of interdisciplinary thinking and performance, and what better way to model this than to have guests from other disciplines teaching content from their perspective. It takes both prior planning and organized follow-up, but is well worth the effort.

References:

Willis, C.G., (2013). Flipping Flop? Can Guest Lecturers Use the Flipped Classroom Format? Presentations. Paper 88.

http://scholarship.kentlaw.iit.edu/lib_pres/88

van Hoek, R., et al. (2011). Embedding insights from industry in supply chain programmes: the role of guest lecturers. *Supply Chain Management: An International Journal*, 16 (2), 142 – 147.

Karen Hughes Miller, associate professor, graduate medical education, University of Louisville School of Medicine.

Announcements

Diversity, Learning, and Student Success: Assessing and Advancing Inclusive Excellence

A Network for Academic Renewal Conference

March 26-28, 2015

San Diego, California

Register by February 12, 2015 for best conference rates

We invite faculty, administrators, student affairs educators, and students to participate in AAC&U's 2015 Conference on [**Diversity, Learning, and Student Success: Assessing and Advancing Inclusive Excellence**](#)—both individually and as teams—to help design and promote educational strategies that ensure all students have access to high-quality learning throughout their varied educational journeys.

In AAC&U's 2015 *Diversity, Learning, and Student Success* conference, participants will explore critical questions and formulate action-oriented strategies to make excellence inclusive for *all* students through sustainable and measurable campus practices. Through its Making Excellence Inclusive (MEI) initiative, AAC&U is advancing and expanding its long-standing commitments to educational quality, diversity, equity, and civic engagement. MEI also provides a framework for educators to use—to deepen students' learning through high-impact practices, including the use of digital innovations, and to make assessment of students' actual work a meaningful part of the teaching and learning experience.

Featured Presentations Include:

Keynote Address:

Note to Educators: Hope Required When Growing Roses in Concrete
Jeff Duncan-Andrade, Associate Professor of Raza Studies and Education Administration and Interdisciplinary Studies, San Francisco State University

Plenary:

Student Voice, Student Empowerment, Student Agency

George Sanchez, Professor of American Studies and Ethnicity and History, and Vice Dean for Diversity and Strategic Initiatives; and a Panel of Undergraduate Students—all of the University of Southern California

The LEAP Challenge Forum: Preparing Students to Create Solutions for Our Future

*Geoffrey Chase, Dean of Undergraduate Studies, and Director, Center for Regional Sustainability; and a **Panel of Undergraduate Students**—all from San Diego State University; and **Gail Evans**, (Retired) Dean of Undergraduate Studies, San Francisco State University and Senior Scholar, AAC&U*

Plenary:

Intentional and Strategic Connections Among Diversity, Learning, and Student Success

Johnnella Butler, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Spelman College

In addition to a full roster of concurrent sessions and plenary presentations, AAC&U also offers practical [Pre-Conference Workshops](#)—three hours of active learning with some of higher education’s leading innovators in developing strategies, practices, and policies that lead to student success.

Learn more about this [conference](#) and [register online](#).

For more information, please call 202.387.3760, or write to Siah Annand at network@aacu.org.