

**Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
Summary of 2003-2004 Fellowship in Assessment**

1. Name and Title:

Gloria Schultz Eastman
Assistant Professor
English and English Education

2. Project Title:

“Aligning Goals and Objectives with Assessments in ENG 317: A Case Study”

3. Project Description:

My initial research question concerned my goals and objectives for “ENG 317: Shakespeare for Future Teachers.” I wondered whether the array of tests, papers, projects, and homework I assigned actually measured whether or not students had met the goals I had set out for the course. Particularly in light of the fact that higher education is currently being held more accountable for student outcomes, I wished to investigate techniques I could use to make the alignment between the objectives and their measures more clear to students as well as to any agency that requires me to document the benefits to students in a particular course. In particular I proposed to:

- a. Review the research on alignment
- b. Align the objectives of the course with various piece of work produced by the students
- c. Revise the major projects of the course and their rubrics to reflect this alignment
- d. Align the objectives of the course with the department goals and with the NCATE goals for teacher education
- e. Review the research on meta-cognition
- f. Facilitate meta-cognition on the part of my students so that they would measure their own learning and become more involved in their own assessment

4. Major Results or Findings of my Work:

- a. Students did better on assignments when I took the time to point out the goal(s) being addressed and to explain the assignment by referring to the rubric I would use to grade the assignment.
- b. Providing sample papers and asking students to grade the paper by using the rubric resulted in greater clarity about the expectations.
- c. Many important objectives, for example, the ability to paraphrase 10-20 lines of Shakespeare with confidence, could not be accurately measured on the midterm or

- final exam. I needed to provide opportunities such as homework, short quizzes, and office appointments to accurately measure this skill.
- d. Important objectives were met by homework or group work assignments. Thus, I needed to reconsider the relative weight I gave to any given assignment. Although I came to this insight too late to incorporate it into my grading system for academic year 2003-4, I see now that I need to rank order the importance of the various objectives and to assign points with reference to that ordering. (Without thinking about much beyond the fact that it was the way I had been taught, I had fallen into a rather routine allotment of 1/3 for exams, 1/3 for essays, and 1/3 for homework and projects.)
 - e. Most, though not all, students took seriously the expectation that they would assess their own progress at given points in the semester. Most students seemed able to provide accurate evaluations of their own work. A small but significant number seemed to undervalue their own achievement.
 - f. Working with the English education faculty as we revised our student teaching assessment to align it with NCATE, NCTE, and other standards allowed me to revise the objectives for ENG 317 with relative ease. I then shared this new assessment tool to the ENG 317 students, in order to make clear that meeting the objectives of this course would prepare them to meet the expectations of student teaching. Some, but not all, students reported that this information motivated them to increase their effort in ENG 317.
 - g. Students are familiar with film and film techniques but had particular difficulty, when viewing a filmed version of a Shakespeare play, arriving at any sense of directorial intention. I came to see that I was asking them to analyze another person's (the director's) interpretation. In other words, they were reasonably adept at analyzing a play or a section of a play when it was "merely" a text on a page, but they struggled to make a reasonable explanation about why a director may have chosen a particular set or type of costuming. If writing a "Production Commentary" comparing two versions of a Shakespeare play continues to be an important part of the course, I will have to find better ways to prepare them with these visual literacy skills. It occurs to me that this insight alone could result in a new and rather different SoTL project.

5. Contributions to the Campus Community:

- a. I will present a workshop to the faculty at Bengal Pause on Thursday, October 21. Activities I have planned include:
 - Sharing what the research says about alignment and meta-cognition
 - Asking faculty to look at their course objectives and assessments in order to share their own "best practice"
 - Considering our own meta-cognitive procedures, i.e., how do we know when we know something?
 - Using those considerations to brainstorm ways to to increase student meta-cogniton and to encourage students to take ownership of their learning.
- b. The informal discussions I have had with colleagues regarding my fellowship have also had a small but significant effect. Some people didn't know what

CASTL was and I was able to explain. More often, faculty members admitted that they too wondered what exactly students were learning from their courses. Although some colleagues are resistant to the notion, most people I spoke with voiced the understanding that college teaching has become more than simply “covering the material;” we have begun to understand that teaching is more about what the students know than about what we as faculty do.

6. Professional Benefits Experienced as a Result of the Fellowship:

- a. Participation on the CASTL advisory committee was a heartening experience for me. I came to know some of the finest teachers on campus as we worked together to meet with departments and to begin the task of educating the faculty about the nature of CASTL and its legitimate place on any scholar’s research agenda. So often it is difficult for junior faculty to meet and work with people from other departments and deanships; I looked forward to the meetings and the chance to forward the work that was important to all of us.
- b. The opportunity to attend the 2004 Colloquium on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, sponsored by the American Association for Higher Education, in San Diego, allowed me to begin to understand the national vision of CASTL. I observed the variety of ways CASTL functions at different colleges and universities and attended sessions where National CASTL Fellows presented their findings. The Colloquium further convinced me that in CASTL I have found a way to place my deep commitment to teaching at the forefront of the research that will lead me to tenure and promotion.
- c. The journal that I kept during this year’s fellowship and the student artifacts that I have collected will allow me to prepare a manuscript to submit for publication. At the San Diego colloquium I learned of *MountainRise*, a SoTL ejournal published at Western Carolina University, one of the other institutions included in our cluster, “Organizing to Foster SoTL.” I believe that this may be a good venue for the work I have done this year.