

Faculty Learning Day: Engaging Students Effectively

July 28, 2012



Faculty Learning Day 2012

Established two years ago, the Teaching and Learning Centre is happy to present the second annual Faculty Learning Day. This event serves as a platform to raise awareness of our teaching, to keep abreast of current trends in pedagogy, and to promote and propagate good practices and techniques in teaching. Above all, it celebrates learning and teaching at UniSIM.

The theme for this year is “Engaging Students Effectively”. Experienced instructors will agree that promoting student engagement lies at the heart of positive academic outcomes and an enriching student experience. The educator’s role is no longer limited to merely transferring factual knowledge to passive recipients, but also to inspire, motivate and engage students in the process of learning.

This theme is of particular relevance to our UniSIM context, where we have a wide spectrum of student academic abilities and background experience. There is, in fact, an inherent and exciting paradox at UniSIM: on the one hand, our adult students choose to enrol for a degree programme – as opposed to being compelled by their parents, or automatically routed to institutes of higher learning as school-leavers – which is offered via a self-directed learning mode with minimal supervision. This means they are fundamentally highly motivated individuals. On the other hand, that motivation is hard to sustain, as many of our students lead busy lives, juggling their fulltime job commitments, family obligations and social responsibilities.

This unique scenario poses a challenge to our full-time and associate faculty. How can they create and sustain a positive and active learning environment where students and instructors can discuss and explore various concepts, perspectives, and ideas? How can they increase student interactivity and help students progress in their learning without undue hand-holding? How, indeed, can they engage students?

Our speakers will share local and global perspectives on engaging students, showcase exemplary practices, effective strategies and insights, and offer practical options for instructors.

We hope you will find these discussions useful. On our part, this year’s Faculty Learning Day provides us with yet another opportunity to renew our promise to help faculty develop and maintain good teaching skills and to facilitate ongoing development to enrich teaching and learning support at SIM University.

A/P Neelam Aggarwal
Director, Teaching & Learning Centre

PROGRAMME

8.30 am	Registration of Participants
8.55 am	Participants to be seated
9.00 am	Opening Address by Professor Cheong Hee Kiat, President, UniSIM
9.15 am	Welcome Address by A/P Wong Yue Kee, Vice-President, Learning Services, UniSIM
9.20 am	Topic: Building Community in Online, Blended, and Face-to-Face Environments <i>Speakers:</i> Professor John Boyer and Ms Katie Pritchard, Virginia Tech
10.00 am	Q&A Session
10.15 am	Tea break
10.35 am	Topic: Teaching, Ior... Or Teaching Law? <i>Speaker:</i> Mr Peh Wee Leng, 2012 Teaching Excellence Award Winner, School of Business, SIM University
10.55 am	Q&A Session
11.15 am	Student Panel: Reflections on Student Engagement at UniSIM <i>Moderator:</i> Professor S. Gopinathan, Academic Adviser, Teaching & Learning Centre, UniSIM <i>Student Panellists:</i> Joey Chin (SASS), Ashlyn Thia (SBIZ), Aminah d/o Mohamed Shariff (HDSS), Chua Teck Sing (SST)
12.15 pm	Closing Remarks by A/P Neelam Aggarwal, Director, Teaching & Learning Centre
12.25 pm	Presentation of Tokens of Appreciation
2.00 pm	Workshop: Digital Communication Tools <i>Facilitators:</i> Professor John Boyer and Ms Katie Pritchard, Virginia Tech Venue: SIM HQ, LT1.09B
3.30 pm	End of Session

Topic: Building Community in Online, Blended, and Face-to-Face Environments



Professor John Boyer and Ms Katie Pritchard,
Virginia Tech, USA

Abstract

Online courses, blended courses, and even traditional large classroom-based courses are often equated with anonymity and distance among student colleagues and between students and faculty. However, the appropriate use of social media and communication tools can foster the creation of a thriving classroom community. This, in turn, can encourage more meaningful online dialogue and group problem-solving. Professor John Boyer and Katie Pritchard will demonstrate the tools and techniques used to build a vibrant learning community. They will discuss the challenges and lessons learned and explore how their approach can be extended to other types of classes.

Speakers' Profiles

John Boyer is an award-winning Senior Instructor with the Department of Geography at Virginia Tech, where he has taught ever-expanding courses in World Regional Geography and the Geography of Wine. In the last decade, enrollments have grown from average class size of 50-60 to 550-600, with World Regional Geography now being taught to a record-breaking 2,750 students every fall. Professor Boyer has a B.S. and M.S. in Geography and has been teaching since 1998. He has published textbooks on world geography and wine, developed a graphic novel series, produces podcasts and an educational website for his classes, and actively incorporates all manner of technologies into the classroom in order to increase interaction and learning for the students, and the world.

Katie Pritchard is a technical assistant with the Department of Geography at Virginia Tech. She specialises in research, incorporation, and implementation of new educational technologies and social media/networking in large and ultra-large classroom formats, with a specific focus on creating teacher-student and student-student interaction opportunities.

Topic: Teaching, *lor...* Or Teaching Law?



Mr Peh Wee Leng,
2012 Teaching Excellence Award Winner,
School of Business, SIM University

Abstract

How do we design courses for part-time students that can engage an adult learner? As an educator, Wee Leng will attempt to answer the question by sharing his personal teaching experience in the classroom. During his presentation, Wee Leng will also share his views on what it takes to thrive as a professional academic and educator in an adult learners' environment, and his motivations for teaching and engagement with the students.

Profile

Peh Wee Leng teaches law modules at UniSIM's School of Business. Over the past 13 years, Wee Leng has been in the education industry as a lecturer and curriculum design specialist. In recent years, he has moved on to take up management roles in Institutes of Higher Learning. His academic background spans three continents – from the US (University of California at Berkeley – BA in Mass Communications) to UK (University of London – LLB), and Singapore, where he completed his graduate studies with an MBA from The National University of Singapore and an MSc in Information Studies from Nanyang Technological University.

Reflections on Student Engagement at UniSIM

Abstract

Leading learning theorists agree that student engagement is crucial to meaningful learning, contributing both to deeper understanding and a positive orientation to lifelong learning. UniSIM is committed to creating a teaching and learning environment which fosters student engagement. On this panel, current students from each of the four schools will share their insights and experiences about UniSIM's learning environment and their views about how this can be further enhanced.

Student Panel

Moderator: Professor S. Gopinathan, Academic Adviser, Teaching & Learning Centre
Student panellists: Joey Chin (SASS), Ashlyn Thia (SBIZ), Aminah d/o Mohamed Shariff (HDSS), Chua Teck Sing (SST)

Workshop



Facilitators: Professor John Boyer and Ms Katie Pritchard,
Virginia Tech
Time: 2.00pm - 3.30pm
Venue: LT1.09B

Topic: Digital Communication Tools

Abstract

Online social media and interactive tools are often viewed to be at odds with the classroom experience. Rather than work against the draw of these gathering places, faculty can learn to utilise them appropriately within the context of a course. Join Professor John Boyer and Katie Pritchard as they provide a tour of online communication tools and demonstrate how each can be customised to promote greater student engagement and interactivity within an academic setting. Among the tools to be discussed are Facebook and Twitter, Ustream and Spreecast (videocasting), Reddit (peer voting), Forums, Delicious (social bookmarking) and music tools.

About SIM University

SIM University is the only university in Singapore dedicated to working adults, allowing them to pursue lifelong learning and higher education while balancing career, family and social responsibilities. It adopts a flexible and practice-focused learning approach and offers more than 50 academic programmes in various disciplines. It has an enrolment of more than 12,000 students. Eligible Singaporeans and Permanent Residents taking SIM University's undergraduate programmes enjoy a government subsidy of up to 55% of tuition fees. SIM University has been a Singapore 'Institution of a Public Character' (IPC) since September 2005.



For more information, please visit www.unisim.edu.sg

Teaching and Learning Centre

The Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) promotes excellence in teaching, supports the learning needs of UniSIM's adult students, and strengthens ties with associates to foster an academic community.

Specifically, TLC does the following:

- Develop, provide and facilitate training for associates in core areas related to teaching
- Meet the learning needs of adult students through a range of support measures such as study skills resources and workshops
- Forge strong ties with associates through regular communication, meetings and sharing sessions, social and appreciation events, newsletters and e-posts
- Share teaching tools, good practices and guidelines; and build a teaching and learning resource corner

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Admissions: Familiarise yourself with the admission requirements and processes for our programmes



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