Editorial

High-Impact Educational Practices

Saouma BouJaoude, Education and CTL, AUB

Involving students in their learning is one of the essential factors for success in college and beyond. This involvement results in greater student engagement in the teaching learning process, promotes significant benefits for student learning and perseverance, reduces dropout rates, and prepares them for success in life and the world of work. Teachers can use a variety of teaching strategies, activities, and tools to involve students in the teaching/learning process. However, at a time when efficiency is paramount, it is important that teachers have access to teaching practices that have the highest possible impact on student success. The Association for American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) has identified ten such practices based on the work of Kuh (2008) and Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges and Hayek (2006) and the results of many iterations of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). This survey collects information from first year and senior college students about their participation in "programs and activities that institutions provide for their learning and personal development. The results provide an estimate of how undergraduates spend their time and what they gain from attending college" (http://nsse.indiana.edu/html/about.cfm).

The high impact practices mentioned above include first-year seminars and experiences, common intellectual experiences, learning communities, writing-intensive courses, collaborative assignments and projects, undergraduate research, diversity/global learning, service learning, community-based learning, internships, capstone courses and projects. These practices are characterized by the following: high performance expectations, time investment by students over extended periods of time, interactions with faculty and peers about fundamental and timely issues, frequent, meaningful and constructive feedback, focus on reflection and integration among the different topics and courses being studied, focus on relating what is learned in class to everyday life, meaningful experiences with diversity through exposure to different cultures and interactions with individuals from diverse backgrounds, and public demonstration of competence According to Kuh (2008), the high impact practices should be organized in such a way to give all undergraduate students the opportunity to "participate in at least two high- impact activities during his or her undergraduate program, one in the first year, and one taken later in relation to the major field." The ten high impact educational practices are described below based on Kuh, O'Donnell, and Reed (2013).

1.First-year seminars and experiences: these seminars offer first year students the opportunity to work with faculty members and peers in small groups on substantive issues. They focus on "critical inquiry, frequent writing, information literacy, collaborative learning, and other skills that develop students' intellectual and practical competencies"

2.Common intellectual experiences: these experiences provide students with opportunities to take required common course and focus on the combining broad themes such as "technology and society, global interdependence - with a variety of curricular and curricular options for students".

3.Learning communities:
These communities provide students with opportunities to experience the common intellectual experiences described above. Students work closely with each other and with their professor to debate "big questions" that integrate knowledge from a number of courses and have implications beyond the classroom.

4.Writing-intensive courses: Students are encouraged to use various forms of writing in all the courses they take. They write also to different audiences. Writing becomes a vehicle for thinking and learning.

5.Collaborative assignments and projects: Working collaboratively on assignments and projects helps students to develop cooperation skills and teamwork. It also allows them to reflect on their own ideas in light of the insights of other members of the team who might have different opinions, perspectives and backgrounds.

6.Undergraduate research: Even though undergraduate research is now more popular in science disciplines, involving all students in research early in their university experience opens to them opportunities to understand and practice the process of knowledge production and the excitement associated with this process in different disciplines.

7.Diversity/global learning: A world in which diverse cultures, religions, languages, ethnicities co-exist, and in some situations biases and inequality prevails, students should have a deep understanding of the differences among the groups, the ability to deal with all, and a respect for diversity. Consequently, students benefit from courses that address issues related to diversity or planned activities that allow them to experience diversity in all its forms.

8.Service learning and community-based learning: The purpose of service and community based-learning is to give students field-based experiential and authentic experiences related to what they are studying in the classroom. To other essential and necessary components of this type of learning are service to the community and reflection on the field-based experiences to derive lessons learned from them.

9.Internships: Being involved in an internship is yet another form of experiential learning that provides students with real world experiences. However, this is typically implemented in a work setting with supervision from a mentor or a coach. It also may involve writing a report and reflecting on the experience.

10.Capstone courses and projects: Capstone courses or final year projects are culminating experiences that help students integrate and apply knowledge and skills acquired in a program and may take a variety of forms such as research papers, portfolios of work accomplished during a program, or design and implementation of an innovative product.

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Teaching Excellence Award

Nidal Daou and Yaser Abunnasr awarded for teaching excellence
Jennifer Muller, Office of Communication, AUB

The fifteenth annual Teaching Excellence Award was given out at a ceremony in West Hall on May 8, 2017. The two recipients were Assistant Professor Nidal Daou from the Department of Psychology, Faculty of Arts and Sciences; and Assistant Professor Yaser Abunnasr from the Department of Landscape Design and Ecosystem Management, Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences.

These two outstanding educators were chosen by a committee comprised of representatives from each of the faculties as well as a student and an alumnus. As chair of the selection committee, Provost Harajli congratulated the awardees and all of the nominees, whom he described as a "very strong cohort of candidates." He also thanked the selection committee for their hard work and professionalism, as well as the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) for their great leadership and administration of this award.

Dr. Nidal Daou graduated from AUB with a BA in Psychology and received her PhD from City University of New York (CUNY). She has been teaching at AUB since 2007. One student testimonial said that Dr. Daou, "does not pour information into her students' minds but rather communicates effectively and encourages her students to explore, question, reflect, and think critically and rigorously."

In her speech, Dr. Daou thanked her students, her mentors, and her parents, who were both teachers themselves. "If the International College offered a teaching excellence award, my mom would have been the Meryl Streep of that award," said Dr. Daou.

The second awardee, Dr. Yaser Abunnasr, is also an alumnus. He earned his Bachelor of Architecture from AUB with a minor in Near Eastern Archaeology, later earning his PhD in Regional Planning from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. He has been teaching at AUB since 2009.

In his speech at the ceremony, Dr. Abunnasr explained his philosophy of teaching as Learning from Learners: "By listening to my students I have been able to demystify the profession of landscape architecture into its practical, theoretical, and ethical values allowing me to become a better mentor and guide, and to grow my students into citizens first and landscape architects second."

As with all the Center's undertakings, there is a synergy between their activities. Winners of the Teaching Excellence Award are asked to share their teaching strategies in one of the CTL seminars or the annual conference, all with the broad aim of creating a self-perpetuating culture of teaching excellence at AUB.

Teaching Excellence Award Speech

Learning from Learners
Yaser Abunnasr, Landscape Design and Ecosystem Management, FAFS, AUB

Dear friends, colleagues, and mentors,

I am honored that you are here and am honored to be here on this occasion as a recipient of this prestigious award. This award is not only a recognition of my efforts, but also of the mission of teaching excellence that AUB stands for. It also extends to the commitment of the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences that values quality teaching. It is an attestation to my Department of Landscape Design and Ecosystem Management's quest to formalize landscape architecture education at AUB, Lebanon, and the region, when no other program did so. It is also a recognition to my colleagues in my department for their support in fostering a collegiate teaching environment. Most importantly, this award is in recognition of my students, the key force behind my teaching efforts, development, and growth over the past seven years at AUB.

My students have taught me how to be PATIENT. As you all well know, it can be very easy to get frustrated in the classroom when trying to teach, whether conveying theoretical ideas or fielding a discussion. Over time, I have observed that student learning needs change and evolve with every cohort of students, and learning how to be patient allowed me to address these needs by being flexible in my teaching approaches. I have learned how to be FLEXIBLE by adjusting the pace of a class, by replacing methods on the spot, or redesigning a whole assignment to ensure that every student can reach her or his potential. Ensuring that all students are at the heart of the learning process, in their inclusion and involvement, is quintessential to my teaching and is not open to compromise.

This leads me to my next learning point, LISTENING. Listening is knowing what I have missed in my communication to the class. Listening is when learners let me know what they know, or they do not know. I listen to my students through frequent class discussions on the progress of a course. These discussions are open to constructive criticism (and not complaints!) and provide me with insights to improve the classroom learning experience.

It is through listening that I have learned to TRANSFER my previous professional experience to my students. Practice is a significant asset when teaching in a professional field. I have learned from my students how to transform this raw experience into knowledge that is simple to communicate and share. By gauging my students' abilities as potential professionals, I have been able to assess how high to set the bar of achievement. And contrary to expectations, the higher the bar is set, the better students perform. By listening to my students I have been able to demystify the profession of landscape architecture into its practical, theoretical, and ethical values allowing me to become a better mentor and guide, and to grow my students into citizens first, and landscape architects second.

Over the past seven years, students have made me learn and see the significance of these qualities in delivering a rich, interactive, and immersive learning experience. Patience, flexibility, listening, and simple communication modes are quality assets that continue to be the foundation of my teaching approach. As much as I have contributed to my students' growth, it is because of them that I have GROWN into the teacher that I am. This recognition would not have been possible without the support of some friends, family, and colleagues. I would like to mention: Dr. Shadi Hamadeh who nominated me for this award. Thank you Shadi.

The Center for Teaching and Learning for providing this important opportunity to AUB faculty; but more important, is the self-reflective and immersive process in developing a teaching portfolio and learning from this process.

I would like to also thank the Chairperson of the Department of Landscape Design and Ecosystem Management, Dr. Rami Zurayk, for his continuous support of my teaching efforts and for his valuable mentoring and thank you to the Dean of The Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences, Dr. Nahla Hwalla, for her continuous support and, her belief in me.

I cannot but recognize the legacy of teaching in my family. The biological genes and borrowed genes have something to do with me receiving this award. Both my parents and both my parents in-law were, and still are, educators. I have seen first-hand the

impact that these four people have had on many generations in school and university teaching. I am simply very lucky.

Lastly, thank you to Maria, my partner, best friend, sounding board, mother, spouse, and also an, educator. Maria has been very patient with my long working hours. Unfortunately, she is not here today as she is conducting an oral history workshop for Syrian refugees in Turkey to document their life histories.

In closing, I am very honored by this recognition and hope to continue to contribute to teaching efforts at AUB.

Thank you all for being here and for your support.

Teaching Excellence Award Speech

Nidal Daou, Psychology, FAS, AUB

Thank you, this is a great honor.

I wish to thank President Khuri, Provost Harajli, Dean El Cheikh, Associate Dean BouJaoude, Professor BouZeineddine, Lamia Husseiny, and the Center for Teaching and Learning for this recognition.

I thank my colleagues in the Department of Psychology and FAS. There are some really beautiful people in Jessup and Fisk Halls and I am lucky to be surrounded by them.

Most of all, I thank my students. This award wouldn't have been possible without them. The classroom has always been a mystical, magical place for me. I know it's the students who make the meaningful difference in this equation; they've always brought out the best in me.

This award would've been impossible without some really special AUB professors who taught me. Professors May Awaida, Bashshar Haydar, Peter Shebaya and my advisor at CUNY, Professor Claire Poulson. Not only were they great teachers, they were superb role models as well. If imitation is the greatest form of flattery, then I have done a good job flattering these professors well, through my 16 years of teaching.

This award has to go to my parents. They were both teachers – excellent teachers. If the International College had a teaching excellence award, my mom would have been the Meryl Streep of that award. My parents taught me many lessons. Two impacted my teaching the most: they taught me to be independent and to not take things for granted.

A final thanks goes to my husband, for always being so supportive; and to our son, for being so precious and for teaching us important lessons on what really matters, on setting priorities.

Thanks to all.

"The best teachers are those who show you where to look-but don't tell you what to see."

Alexandra K. Trenfor

The Evolution of Medical Education

Ramzi Sabra, MD, MHPE, FM, AUB

In 1910, Abraham Flexner published a seminal report on the state of medical education in the USA, which had a profound impact on the way medicine was and still is taught. As a result of that report, several medical schools had to shut down, as they did not meet the expected standards. Medical education became embedded within universities and consisted essentially of the 2 + 2 model: i.e. students would spend the first 2 years learning the disciplines of the basic medical sciences in preparation for the latter 2 years which they would spend on the wards rounding with and shadowing physicians. Much of the learning during the first 2 years was didactic and consisted of lectures and laboratory work, while during the following 2 years, it became more hospital-based, patient centered, less structured, and more opportunistic.

Slowly over time, and particularly in the last 3-4 decades, changes were introduced to the way medical education was delivered as a result of many factors which included: the vast growth in medical knowledge and, more recently, its widespread availability, changes to the healthcare systems and delivery (e.g. managed care, short hospital stays), changes in society (e.g. emphasis on patient rights, patient safety, demand for more humane and ethical doctors, growth of consumerist society), and, most importantly, progress in education theory, research, and practice.

Tens of reports have been issued by professional or academic bodies and by individual experts calling for improvements in medical education (e.g. see Academic Medicine vol. 85, #9, Sept. supplement, 2010 p. S26, relating to undergraduate medical education). Many of these recommendations have found their way to standards of accreditation issued by accrediting bodies like the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) of the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) and the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME). Below, we present some of the trends, themes, and principles that permeate contemporary medical education:

Integration: The emphasis is on learning content in an integrated manner (both across the basic sciences and across the basic-clinical continuum) so that students can relate concepts to the "big picture" and thus see the relevance of what they are learning to their ultimate goal of becoming physicians; this would increase their motivation and improve their understanding and retention. The old relatively sharp divide between "clinical" and "preclinical" is fading.

Active learning: Learners should engage actively with the material they are learning and are not simply receptacles for transmitted information. Curricula must ensure that a substantial component of the program of study requires that learners be doing something to demonstrate their understanding of the content e.g. applying knowledge in solving problems, discussing issues, or reflecting on experiences.

Lifelong, self-learning skills: The tremendous growth of medical knowledge has made it obvious that medical curricula cannot simply, or even possibly hope to, "cover content". This, together with the fact that content (or information) has become easily accessible through electronic media, resulted in two realizations: a) curricula should focus on important concepts and principles and on their application in problem solving, rather than on conveying information purely for memorization, and b) students, faced with a situation or question, should be able to define their learning needs, access the needed information, and more importantly, assess it, critique it and use it in practice. Students must therefore be taught how to identify their needs, seek necessary information, and reach answers

Competency-based education: Programs should articulate the specific competencies expected of learners at graduation and at each step along the way (milestones). They must describe the teaching and assessment modalities that are aligned with those competencies and that ensure their achievement by learners. Along with life-long learning and active learning, competency based education provides a much more learner-centered approach to education than the classical teacher-centered approach – where teaching by the professor is the focus rather than actual student learning. Competency-based education requires a closer and individualized follow-up of learners over the course of their education while very clearly specifying the alignment between learning objectives, content, teaching methods, and assessment approaches. Competency-

based education ensures standardization of education but also allows flexibility based on individual achievement and ability.

Emphasis on professional development: Traditional curricula have always emphasized knowledge acquisition and clinical skills but have somewhat neglected essential aspects of medical education such as the ability to communicate with patients, their families, and co-workers, to work as effective team members, to behave professionally, to exhibit humanitarianism and empathy, and to be active advocates for patients and communities. Modern medical curricula must address these issues.

Simulation: It is well-known amongst professionals that the development of skills requires repetitive practice. The growth of the patient safety movement has curtailed the ability of students to "practice" on patients. Simulation (both in the form of electronic or task trainers or as standardized patients) has made it possible to overcome this limitation.

Alignment with changes in the healthcare delivery system: It is imperative that medical education be aligned with medical practice since the bulk of education takes place in the workplace. Today, more emphasis is being placed on ambulatory medicine as average duration of hospitalization has diminished significantly. Moreover, inter-professional education is a relatively new approach that is being increasingly emphasized and required in order to prepare students for inter-professional practice and teamwork. In this model, learners in diverse fields related to healthcare, including medicine, nursing, pharmacy, physical therapy, social work, psychology, etc., learn together within teams dedicated to addressing issues in patient care.

Medical education as a scholarly field: For a long time, what was expected in the field of medical care, i.e. the provision of evidence from scientific studies that would direct patient management, was not demanded for educational practices. Medical education has now come of age: a scholarly discipline with requirements for systematic research to support practice.

Some of the concepts and ideas expressed in the 8 points above were implicit in Flexner's recommendations, some are novel, and some constitute a shifting or increased emphasis on areas that were neglected in the implementation of medical curricula.

Gamification in Education: Developing a Simulation Game to Teach Planning and Scheduling

Farook Hamzeh, Assistant Professor, CEE, FEA, AUB

Planning and scheduling are intricate processes conducted by experienced professionals to ensure projects are delivered on time, within budget, and to the required quality and safety standards. Construction projects face uncertainties and variability due to the large number of factors affecting the project site, making planning and scheduling further complex. As a result, it is challenging to teach these processes in the classroom due to the limited experience and exposure of students to the construction environment. To alleviate the aforementioned problems, a new interactive game (the Project Planner's game, Figure 1) was developed for teaching civil engineering students the subtleties of planning and scheduling techniques. When using the game, students play the role of a Project Planner of a complex project. The main objective is to complete all the work "On time" and "Within Budget". Students' responsibility includes assigning a number of resources to complete tasks on the project every week based on the schedule, status of resources, and data collected from their staff.

The number of tasks that can be executed depends on the capacity that the student, as a Project Planner, assigns for that week. Since the execution sequence and progress of upcoming weeks cannot be known (only forecasted) before hand and depends on the resources made available, the student needs to assign the number of resources based on their predication of the task load for the upcoming week. Based on the input of the student, the simulation runs and shows how the operations are progressing, how the budget and schedule is evolving, what tasks are completed or not. By monitoring the outcomes of their choices, the students will be able to understand the concepts of planning, experiment with different decisions and observe their results, analyze what is happening in light of planning and scheduling principles, and manage projects towards successful completion by learning from experience.

Toward an Ecological Model of Writing and Learning

Chris M. Anson, Distinguished University Professor and Director,Campus Writing and Speaking Program, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, USA

What comes to mind when we think about writing in higher education? Typically, it's a set of skills to be mastered, honed, and refined. We immediately put a frame of "ability" around writing, treating it as the outcome of what the writer has learned. We then apply this frame to students, who are characterized as either skilled and in need of no further practice, or deficient and subjected to "remediation" (invoking the metaphor of disease). All writing from this perspective serves the purpose of a formal test of ability or knowledge (or both).

An ecological view tries to re-frame writing to allow a much greater range of genres, purposes, and orientations. Based on sociocultural activity theory and theories of situated discourse (Gee, 1996; Greenhow & Robelia, 2009; Hull & Schultz, 2001; Street, 1993), an ecological view sees writing as part of a complex, interrelated world of textual communication and therefore does not privilege one "organism" above the others. This means that members of an online forum devoted to sharing knowledge and tips about growing roses use writing in equally worthwhile ways as scholars who are studying DNA markers for rose gene-stacking. Although academics may balk at the idea that, for example, a student's response to her Reddit forum is considered "equally" valuable as her academic essay on a person of historical significance, the comparison itself is unfair: each piece of discourse exists to fulfill its own rhetorical, information, and interpersonal functions, just as each organism has its place in the ecosystem.

When we privilege some forms of discourse in the academy above others, we may deny students opportunities to use writing—especially informally—as a way to grapple with and learn difficult subject matter. We may assume that large essays, especially term papers, are better than short summaries, and that formal essays are better than journal entries exploring one's connection to a subject. We may assume that writing as output—the end result of learning—is better than writing as input—a way to explore and work through the material, even tentatively, in the midst of learning.

Consider the following reflection a student wrote in an embryology course (Connery, 1988):

The really neat thing I liked about the Thursday lecture was she told us the mechanism of epiboly. I was wondering how sheets of cells move. Well, it seems that the ectodermal cells put out little pilipodia which attach to the vitelline membrane and then contract. This continues until the ectoderm completely covers the yolk. Aha! Then one of the layers is ectoderm. Dumb-de-dumb-dumb-dumb! Okay, so what's the second layer? Possibly mesoderm? Yeah. How about endoderm? I don't think so because the endoderm is the first to form from invagination at the primitive streak. The endoderm displaces the hypoblast according to Abbott (although the book doesn't take this point of view-it says that the endoderm is formed on top of the hypoblast). Regardless, the endoderm is completely formed by the time the mesoderm is invaginated. Therefore, it's probably mesoderm and ectoderm! I need to find out for sure. (100)

Framed conventionally, this piece of writing violates multiple conventions of formal academic writing (abbreviations, fragments, questions without answers, lack of a thesis statement, and so on). From an ecological view, the writing serves a crucial purpose in helping the student to explore confusions and work toward understanding. When we reframe the writing, we immediately recognize its potential reach and the value of its diverse forms and uses.

"Low-stakes" (frequent, brief, informal writing designed to explore subject matter) can be woven into coursework without additional burdens on the instructor. Mini-cases and scenarios, dialogues between two theorists or characters or historical figures, reflections, mock panel sessions, and a host of other genres of writing are being used across the disciplines to help strengthen students' learning and compel them to read course material more fully and critically (see Anson, in press; Anson, 2011). In an advanced biology course at an American university, a professor asks her students to summarize complex peer-reviewed journal articles in the form of a Tweet. While the writing itself is highly compressed, it requires a sophisticated underlying "deep structure" of activity: careful reading and re-reading, and an analysis of the conclusion at the hear of the the article. Yet the point of such an assignment is not to "get it right" as much

as to encourage the work of interpretation. Instead of punishing the student whose summary somewhat misses the mark, we can have students compare their summaries in class and find consensus on the meaning of the article, emphasizing active learning through writing. Such assignments are also extremely difficult to find online, making them "plagiarism-proof" (Anson, 2008).

Most importantly, an ecological view of writing releases us from the same dull, canonical assignments that are the mainstay of higher education and which both students and instructors find to be uninspired and tedious. Lower-stakes, learning-rich assignments give us the freedom to be creative—along with our students—to enhance the educational experience. And although the goal of writing is not necessarily to improve "skill," the very experience of making meaning is bound to do so.

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Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL)
Seminars and Workshops

During the fall semester of 2016-2017, CTL staff organized a panel and gave a presentation in the New Faculty Orientation on Aug. 25. CTL hosted a workshop on September 27, entitled Developing and Assessing Program Learning Outcomes. Two workshops were offered on October 18 and October 25, respectively entitled Course Learning Outcomes: Development and Assessment and Integrating Technology in the Teaching / Learning Process: Creating e-portfolios Using Google Sites. These were followed by a seminar on Capstone Courses in Higher Education on November 15. CTL also offered a seminar on Compiling and Assessing Teaching Portfolios on Dec 1 and another workshop entitled Instructional Strategies to Promote Critical Thinking on Dec. 12. Most of these activities were first discussed in a meeting of the CTL Advisory Committee held on October 3, 2016.

During the spring semester of 2016-2017, CTL organized a panel and gave a presentation in the New Faculty Orientation on January 19 and organized its annual faculty seminar on Teaching and Learning Excellence. The seminar included seven sessions and was held every Tuesday from 5:00 to 7:00 pm from Feb 28 to April 11. Each session discussed a different topic. Participants in the Seminar included 15 faculty members and PhD candidates. Moreover, other faculty guests attended a number of sessions because of their interest in the session topic.

Other Activities
Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) grants. Year six of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) grants program was organized and four proposals were supported within the framework of the SoTL initiative managed by CTL.

Annual Conference. CTL organized its seventh annual conference on Effective Teaching and Learning in Higher Education in collaboration with IT-Academic Services, and the Communication Skills program of the English Department. The Conference theme was 21-Century Skills in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education; the Conference attended by around 130 participants from Universities in Lebanon and other Arab countries.

Faculty Learning Communities. CTL introduced a new FLC on Transformative Learning which will start its activities during the fall semester of 2017-2018 semester.

AUB Teaching Excellence Award. Seventeen faculty members accepted the nomination for the Award this year. The portfolios of these candidates were reviewed by the Teaching Excellence Award Committee which voted to present this year's AUB Teaching Excellence Award to Dr. Nidal Daou from the Department of Psychology, Faculty of Arts and Sciences and Dr. Yaser Abunnasr from the Department of Landscape Design and Ecosystem Management, Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences.

Individual Consultations. A number of individual consultations based on faculty requests were held during the academic year 2016-2017. These consultations covered program learning outcomes, course syllabus design, compiling a teaching portfolio, and writing proposals for conducting scholarship of teaching and learning. In addition, CTL held meetings with AUCA in a professional advising capacity.

REP Consultations. CTL worked with REP on preparing training manuals and conducting workshops on a variety of topics for Princess Noura Bint Abdel Raman University in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Moreover, CTL conducted workshops at Ahfad University for Women in Sudan and Rafik Hariri University in Lebanon.

Conferences attended. American Council on Education's (ACE) 99th Annual meeting from March 11 to 13 in Washington DC.

For more information on CTL activities, visit *CTL website http://www.aub.edu.lb/ctl/Pages/index.aspx*

Seventh International Conference on Effective Teaching and Learning in Higher Education

Dana Abed, Office of Advancement

The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) in collaboration with the Office of Information Technology and the Communication Skills Program at the American University of Beirut (AUB) organized the Seventh International Conference on Effective Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. The conference, which took place at AUB on February 10 and 11, brought together prominent speakers and international faculty members to share their insights on effective teaching and learning at the university level.

Associate Provost Hala Muhtasib thanked the parties involved in organizing this event during her speech at the opening ceremony and highlighted AUB's mission of providing excellence in higher education in the region and beyond. Dr. Muhtasib explained that the conference included 12 sessions, 36 presentations, four workshops, and two keynote speeches, providing "practical skills and evidence on how to improve higher learning."

Attending the conference were faculty members and interested individuals from eight local universities across Lebanon, as well as from universities in Jordan, Kuwait, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. The first keynote speech was delivered by Dr. Chris Anson, professor of English and director of the Campus Writing and Speaking Program at North Carolina State University. The speech, "Writing as a High Impact Practice: Toward an Ecological Model of Writing and Learning," discussed effective ways of integrating writing as a method of learning rather than a subject to be taught. After noting that writing skills are getting worse amongst students in college, Dr. Anson detailed an ecological model whereby writing is mandatory to grasp the information given in any course. For example, students should practice writing by summarizing readings in Sociology or by explaining equations in Mathematics. `

Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) is a practice that was first inaugurated in the 1970s, but is slowly being built up in colleges around the world. Although not fully developed, it is clear that WAC is helping students improve the quality of their writing, and slowly erasing the common belief that writing should be exclusive to literature studies. Dr. Anson invited all faculty members to move towards an ecological model that covers a wider range of uses for writing. Anson explained that writing should be a tool for better learning, and a skill developed by all students irrespective of their major.

The second keynote speech was delivered by Dr. Youssif Asfour, Chief Information Officer at AUB. The speech, entitled "Technology in an Era of Transformation in Teaching and Learning" discussed how technology can help professors improve the knowledge acquisition of students. With change being the only constant nowadays, Dr. Asfour explained that he had to rethink the information he learned throughout his career. Things learned can become obsolete overnight, and things thought to be impossible can become possible in no time. In an era of rapid change, technology provides us with real-time access to information.

Technology is helping teachers find new ways of communicating with students and deliver content in a new way, such as through internet searches, blended courses, or online courses.

According to Dr. Asfour, teaching needs to shift focus from providing information to learning how to search for information and how to synthesize knowledge. This era calls for going beyond critical thinking, toward adaptive thinking. Asfour called for more and better inter-disciplinary coordination and collaboration in order to be adaptive to the emergence of new information. Dr. Asfour explained that the mission of educators is to explore ways of effectively teaching students to use technology to constantly learn, constantly adapt, work across disciplines, and leverage others. The sessions and workshops that followed over the two-day conference discussed multiple subjects such as online courses, web design, bilingual teaching, planning and assessment of course learning outcomes, peace education, liberal arts curricula, and student activism.

The conference also aimed at providing opportunities for building professional relationships among members of the community of university faculty members locally, regionally, and internationally.