SUNY Empire State College’s Capacity and Expertise in Open and Distance Education

Jill Buban, SUNY Empire State College

SUNY Empire State College has a long history of involvement and innovation in the areas of open and distance education. While initiatives in these areas are spread throughout our 34 state locations, many originate in the Center for Distance Learning (CDL). The Center offers distance courses across all of the College’s areas of study, and was home to nearly 8,000 undergraduate students in the 2009-10 academic year. Online courses are offered through the Center in the following ten areas of study:

- The Arts
- Community and Human Services
- Cultural Studies
- Educational Studies
- Human Development
- Historical Studies
- Interdisciplinary Studies
- Science, Math, and Technology
- Social Theory, Structure and Change

In addition to these areas of study, Nursing degrees are also awarded through the Center for Distance Learning. Cutting edge, online instructional techniques and design are intertwined through all of the courses offered in these areas.

The College’s expertise in these areas has allowed us to bring many prominent speakers to campus for professional development opportunities. These speakers include: Ray Schroeder, Professor Emeritus of Communication, and founding director of the Center for Online Learning, Research, and Service at the University of Illinois at Springfield; Stephen Downes, Senior Researcher at the National Research Council of Canada who specializes in the fields of online learning, new media, pedagogy and philosophy; and Sir John Daniel, chief executive officer of the Commonwealth of Learning, and one of the world’s leading authorities on open and distance education.

Below is a sampling of faculty expertise in the areas of open and distance learning:

**Meg Benke, PhD, Provost/Vice President Academic Affairs:** Dr. Benke has been committed to the development and expansion of distance education throughout her 20 year tenure at the College. Previously the dean of the Center for Distance Learning, she oversaw its massive growth and sustained the vision for high quality online learning resources for distance learners. In addition to her work at the College, she is the President of the Sloan Consortium, a consortium of institutions and organizations committed to quality online education.

**Carol Carnevale, PhD, Business, Management, and Economics Faculty:** Dr. Carnevale is currently developing open learning resources in the area of human resource management. She has presented and has been published numerous times in the areas of quality online instruction, asynchronous learning, online discussions, and effective online learning design. In addition, she is a reviewer for the International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning.
Valeri Chukhlomin, PhD, Business, Management, and Economics Faculty: Dr. Chukhlomin’s research and expertise lies in the area of technology enhanced business education. He is also published in the areas of teaching online, developing online courses, and international eLearning skills.

Robert Clougherty, PhD, Dean of The School for Graduate Studies: Dr. Clougherty has led faculty in the creation of a degree in Emerging Technology and a certificate in Technology Transfer. Dr. Clougherty accomplishments include: publications in the area of the use of wikis in chemistry instruction, keynote addresses at e-Learning conferences, using emerging technologies to foster STEM education and the future of e-learning and synchronous learning.

Marnie Evans, ABD, Metropolitan Center Director of Assessment: Ms. Evans is well versed in topics pertaining to e-Portfolios. She has presented on the topic of e-Portfolios and has obtained a FIPSE grant on behalf of the College for work with e-Portfolios.

Linda Frank, Director of the Office of Veteran and Military Education: Ms. Frank serves as the vice president for institutions on the Council of College and Military Educators (CCME) Executive Board. She is also the CCME liaison to the National Association of Institution and Military Education Services (NAIMES). She has expanded the College’s military connections to include agreements with the major military online portals.

Suzanne Hayes, Director of Academic Technologies: Ms. Hayes main focus area is the use of innovative technologies in online learning. She is the recipient of the Sloan Consortium Award for Effective Practice in Blended Learning.

Betty Lawrence, Ed.D, Interim Associate Dean of the Center for Distance Learning: Dr. Lawrence’s research focuses on the areas of STEM and online learning. She has presented on these topics as well as open and e-learning and the integration of STEM in open learning.

Tom Mackey, Ph.D, Interim Dean of the Center for Distance Learning: Dr. Mackey’s work is focused on information literacy and cloud computing. He is broadly published and has presented many times in areas pertaining to information literacy and wikis.

Donna Mahar, PhD, School of Graduate Studies Faculty: Dr. Mahar is the committee chair for the Virtual Incubator for Teachers at the School of Graduate Studies. She is guiding this effort to create, establish and make available repositories of materials related to teacher education and practice. These will be made available through an open education resource.

Joyce McKnight, D.Ed and Certificate in Distance Education, Community and Human Services Faculty: Dr. McKnight is an active participant in the global open educational resources (OER) movement especially for the OER Foundation and the OER-University. She is actively engaged in a global community of educators dedicated to enabling citizens of developing nations and peripheral communities to easily access and use the many open resources available on the Internet. An outgrowth of this community is http://wikieducator.org of which ESC is a member and of which Dr. McKnight was recently named a WikiEducator User Page Expo winner for April 2011.

Peter Shea, PhD, Associate Professor at SUNY Albany and Research Associate for SUNY Learning Network (SLN): Dr Shea has completed numerous scholarly works included journal articles, books, presentation and television appearances on the topic of online teaching and learning. Dr. Shea has received multiple grants in subsets of this area and also awards from Sloan-C and Educase. He is the co-chair of the 2011 Sloan-C Conference.
Nikki Shrimpton, Ph.D., Dean Central New York Center: Dr. Shrimpton is a team member on the planning and development of the SUNY Empire State College citizen science project - An Undergraduate Research Experience: Using Field Methods and GIS to Monitor Spatial and Temporal Patterns of Japanese Beetle Populations Related to Changing Climate Conditions across New York. The interactive mapping project is designed to provide field science experiences for students and research opportunities for faculty. Nikki is also the Co-developer (with William Ehmann and Kent Stanton) of SUNY Empire State College’s Citizen Science opportunities website (Symbiosis). The website contains detailed descriptions of, and links to, Citizen Science projects across New York State. The site was designed as resource for faculty looking for hands-on, authentic science experiences for students (2008-2009).

David Starr-Glass, M.S. Flexible and Online Learning, International Programs Faculty: Dr. Glass is involved with many instructional activities at the global level. His research includes military learners online, designing experiential elements in distance learning courses, creating distance communities of learners and social presence in online learning.

Patrice Torcivia, ABD, Center for International Programs Faculty: Ms. Torcivia has developed and implemented Web 2.0 tools to increase instructor-student interactions. She also coaches international and U.S. instructors and students on the use of Web 2.0 tools. She has presented on cloud computing and emerging technologies both internationally and within the U.S.

Nan Travers, PhD, Director of Collegewide Assessment:

Frank Vandervalk, PhD, Social Sciences Faculty: Dr. Vandervalk’s interest lies in open educational resources. He has received two reassignments at the College to develop open educational resources. He has published a variety of articles in this area and has also presented numerous times on the topic.

Victoria Vernon, PhD, Social Sciences Faculty: Dr. Vernon’s research in the field of economics. She utilizes open resources for her course in green economics.

Ed Warzala, PhD, Social Sciences Faculty and Unit Coordinator: Dr. Warzala is a member of the Open University Research Group (OURG) at SUNY Empire State College. His commitment to open learning stems from a long held commitment to equality of access to higher education and the social justice inherent in the open learning movement.

David Wolf, CDL Instructional Designer: Mr. Wolf’s foci include social media, Web 2.0 tools, MapBlogs, teaching GPS online, GIS for interactive data sharing, mobile technology, the evolution of learning objects, and learning management systems.

Carol Yeager, Center for International Programs Faculty: Ms. Yeager’s interests lie in the area of WikiEducator, Moodle, and Connectivism. She has completed various courses in certifications in these open learning areas in order to better integrate creativity in distance learning courses.

Prior Learning Assessment: SUNY Empire State College Expertise

The recognition of non-classroom, college-level learning is characteristic of many open and adult-friendly universities. The faculty at SUNY Empire State College recognizes that adults have many opportunities for valuable learning in their everyday lives and work. When this prior learning is college level, it can be identified in an evaluative process designed to determine whether it is worthy of college credit. Students and mentors work together to determine what college level learning a student might have and what might be used in a degree program.
At SUNY Empire State College, we use the following standards to decide whether learning is college level:

- The learning should be theoretical as well as practical.
- Students should be able to identify the principles involved in doing what they are able to do.
- The learning should be equivalent to college-level work in terms of quality.
- The learning should be identified as college level when evaluated by an expert in the field. This means that students should be able to demonstrate by examination, license, essay, etc., that their knowledge or competence is at the college level.

Below is a sampling of faculty expertise in the assessment of prior learning:

**Xenia Coulter**, PhD, Center for International Programs Mentor and Mentor Emerita, Central New York Center: Dr. Coulter focuses on all types of experiential learning but her particular expertise includes mentoring and learning in multicultural populations and learning experiences of women.

**Marnie Evans**, ABD, Metropolitan Center Director of Assessment: Her involvement with ePortfolios is an outgrowth of her expertise in prior learning. Ms. Evans has presented numerous times on topics that include the student’s role in the evaluation process and the evaluator’s role in the process.

**Alan Mandell**, PhD, College Professor of Adult Learning and Mentoring: Dr. Mandell is interested in and has written, made presentations and conducted workshops on adult learning and mentoring. With colleague Lee Herman, he has written many essays and the book, *From Teaching to Mentoring: Principle and Practice, Dialogue and Life in Adult Education* (Routledge, 2004). The second edition of his book with Elana Michelson, *Portfolio Development and Adult Learning* was published in 2004 (Stylus).

**Elana Michelson**, PhD, Graduate Studies: Dr. Michelson has numerous scholarly publications and presentations in the field of prior learning assignment. She is a long time champion of adult learning and experiential learning. She was recently the recipient of first endowed chair at the College, the Susan H. Turben Chair in Mentoring.

**Viktoria Popova-Gonci**, Long Island Center Mentor Assessment Specialist: Ms. Popova-Gonci focuses on experiential learning in a general context and also studies the role of the evaluator in prior learning assessment.

**Nan Travers**, PhD, Director of Collegewide Academic Review: Dr. Travers has been involved in research in adult learning, including PLA and ways in which students develop self-regulated learning. She is involved in national prior learning organizations and is currently leading the ePortfolio development team at the College.

**Scholarly Publications**

Below is a sampling of scholarly faculty work in the area of prior learning assessment and online and open learning.

**Online and Open Learning**


Mackey, T.P. “Wiki Transparency in Open Learning Environments” (Submitted to *First Monday*, December 2010; article is currently under peer review)

[http://crl.acrl.org/content/early/2010/04/29/crl-76r1.short](http://crl.acrl.org/content/early/2010/04/29/crl-76r1.short)

[http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/search/detailmini.jsp? nfb=true& &ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=EI777378&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=EI777378](http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/search/detailmini.jsp?nfb=true&ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=EI777378&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=EI777378)


[http://www.igi-global.com/bookstore/chapter.aspx?TitleId=39464](http://www.igi-global.com/bookstore/chapter.aspx?TitleId=39464)


http://editlib.org/p/35148

http://www.editlib.org/p/35129

http://adsabs.harvard.edu/abs/2009AGUFMED11A0572M

Wolf, D. “Exploring the Merging of GIS and Blogging as an Effective On-line Learning Tool”. In C. Montgomerie & J. Seale (Eds.), Proceedings of World Conference on Educational Multimedia, Hypermedia and Telecommunications 2008. Chesapeake, VA: AACE.,(Guba G & K Stanton were second and third authors)  
www.editlib.org/d/29141/proceeding_29141.pdf

www.editlib.org/d/30248/proceeding_30248.pdf

Prior Learning Assessment


Herman, Lee, & Coulter, Xenia. John and Maria: What mentors learn from experiential learning. All About Mentoring, 15, Fall.  

Coulter, Xenia (2001). Hidden transformation of women’s knowledge through mothering. All About Mentoring, 22, Fall. [http://commons.esc.edu/academicaffairs/open-distance-learning-and-pla-empire-state-college-expertise/]

Coulter, Xenia (2002). The role of conscious reflection in experiential learning. All About Mentoring, 24, Fall. [http://commons.esc.edu/academicaffairs/open-distance-learning-and-pla-empire-state-college-expertise/]


Michelson, E. Portfolio Development and the Assessment of Prior Learning. Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2004 (with Alan Mandell)


Presentations

Online and Open Learning

2011


Evans, Margaret, “ePortfolios Around ESC in 60 Minutes,” group presentation by members of the college-wide ePortfolio Team, All College Meeting, Empire State College, March 2011

Evans, Margaret, "Making Connections: Lessons Learned from a Multi-Campus ePortfolio Collaboration," break-out presentation with Bret Eynon, LaGuardia Community College, and members of the Making Connections Seminars, AAC&U national ePortfolio Forum


Lawrence, Betty, HP Summit (invited) 2011: Learner-Centric Online Education: Sharing Best Practices in Empowering and Transforming Faculty (with Pauline Carrico, ESC)

Vanderwalk, Frank, “The Project for Online Open Learning.” Online workshop for the New Century Learning Consortium, April 14, 2011 (scheduled)

2010


Chukhlomin, V. (2010). ‘Online university explained’ (June 12, 2010). A Presentation at the first international online conference, European Humanities University, Vilnius, Lithuania.


Evans, Margaret, “‘What we ask them to do is who we ask them to be:’ Fostering Student Agency and Authority Through ePortfolios,” presentation with Cathy Leaker and Aaron Zachmeier, AAEEBL ePortfolio Summit: “ePortfolios & the Emergent Learning Ecology” Boston, MA, July 2010


Evans, Margaret, ”ESC 101 and ePortfolio pilot project,” presentation at "Circles Gathering on Adult Learning," Empire State College, Latham, NY, April 2010

Evans, Margaret, ”Strategies for Success: Examples for Building Students' Toolkits, Skills and Confidence,” presentation on ESC 101 and ePortfolio, All College Conference, Empire State College, March 2010

Teaching Presence Outside of Threaded Discussions: Practical Implications. 16th Sloan-C Conference on Online Learning, Orlando, Florida, November 2010.

Learning Presence. 16th Sloan-C Conference on Online Learning, Orlando, Florida, November 2010.


Lawrence, Betty and Snyder, Lisa. “Open Learning and E-Learning: Creating Innovative Intersections” International Forum on Women in eLearning

Lawrence, Betty, IFWE (International Forum for Women in E-learning) Conference 2010: "Open Learning and e-Learning: Creating Innovative Intersections"


Mackey, Thomas. “To Individualize Make It Personalized: Creating Project Based Service E-Learners” with Mara Kaufmann, 26th Annual Conference on Distance Teaching and Learning, Madison, WI, August 5, 2010.


Tom Mackey, Betty Lawrence, Ken Charuk and Mete Cetiner, “Creating a Web of Learning: Toward an Open University Model.”

McKnight, J. (2010) “Assessing and Supporting Self-direction in an Online Distance Education Environment” presented at the 24th Annual International Self-Directed Learning Symposium Feb. 3-6 Cocoa Beach Florida


Oaks, Susan, IDOL & ICEM 2010 Conference, Anadolu University, Turkey, “Effective Online Learning Design: Communities of Inquiry Move into Web 2.0” (with Otolorin Jones, Carol Carnevale). Paper currently under consideration for publication.


Oaks, Susan, Faculty Development Presentation, “Online Resources,” American University at Sharjah, UAE


Snyder, Lisa. Utilizing Concept Mapping Software to Increase Comprehension in Blended Learning Environments. ESC Faculty Development

Snyder, Lisa. Increasing Student Engagement in Discussions: Utilizing the Jigsaw Strategy. 2008


Vanderwalk, Frank, "Open Learning and The Myth of Linear Thinking in a Mash(ed)up World." Invited Lecture, February 11, Empire State College, Saratoga Springs, NY.

Vanderwalk, Frank, “Into the POOL: A Project for Online Open Learning”. (With Kent Stanton) Presentation at Empire State College, 2010 All Areas of Study Meeting, Saratoga Springs, NY.

Wolfe, David, “Mobile Technology for Adult Learners” Adult Higher Education Alliance (AHEA) Pre-conference Workshop Technology Tools for Adult Learners, Saratoga Springs, NY

Wolfe, David, “MapBlog v2.0 Employs Web 2.0 for Improved Pedagogy” Edmedia Conference in Toronto, Canada.

Wolfe, David “Harnessing Web 2.0 Tools for Interactive Online Language Learning” Edmedia Conference in Toronto, Canada


2009

Chukhlomin, V. ‘Virtual learning environments’ (June 30, 2009). Presentations for faculty and teaching staff at European Humanities University, Vilnius, Lithuania.


Oaks, Susan, Cambridge International Conference on Open & Distance Learning “Supporting Quality Online Learning in a Period of Rapid Growth” (with Carol Carnevale, Oto Jones, Craig Tunwall). One of top 3 best papers.

Oaks, Susan, Interviewed for Starlink, State of Texas Academic Resource


Snyder, Lisa. Focusing on Improvement: An Evaluation of an Online Reading Specialist and Literacy Instructor Training Program SUNY Conference on Instructional Technologies. 2009

Snyder, Lisa. Discussion Facilitation and Evaluation: Sharing our Strategies for Success. SUNY Empire State College Center for Distance Learning Conference. 2009

Snyder, Lisa. Grade-books and Alternative Assessments: Options for Course Design. ESC Faculty Development 2009

Wolfe, David. “Demonstrating Historical and Cultural Aspects of Indigenous Peoples with Interactive Mapblogs” Edmedia Conference in Honolulu HI


Wolfe, David. Web 2.oh” (Damon Cook, co-presenter) All College Conference on Distance Learning, Saratoga Springs, NY

2008


McKnight, J. (2008) “Building Virtual-Real Communities Online” 14th Sloan-C International Conference on Online Learning, Orlando, FL

Wolfe, David “Exploring the Merging of GIS and Blogging as an Effective On-line Learning Tool,” Elearn in Las Vegas, NV

Wolfe, David “Employing GIS for Creating Interactive Data Sharing and Visual Pedagogy” EDMedia in Vienna, Austria

Prior Learning Assessment

Coulter, Xenia, Herman, Lee, Hodgson, Thomas, Nagler, Sylvain & Rivera de Royston, Irene. Assessing adult’s experiential learning. Unpublished Executive Summary of findings from research funded by the National Center of Adult Learning (NCAL), presented at the NCAL Annual Meeting, Saratoga Springs, NY, September.


Evans, Margaret. "Embracing Resources: Providing Frequent, Consistent and Available Training for Evaluators," with ESC Evaluator Training Task Group, CAEL Workshop, CAEL International Conference, San Diego, CA, November 2010

Evans, Margaret. "Approaches to Portfolio Quality: A Roundtable Discussion", roundtable with Linda Fonte, St. Joseph’s College and Carleen M. Baily, Thomas Edison State College, CAEL Roundtable, San Diego, CA, November 2010

Evans, Margaret. “Designing A Website For Evaluators Of Prior Learning Assessment,” presentation with ESC Evaluator Training Task Group, National Institute on the Assessment of Adult Learning, Atlantic City, NJ, June 2010

Evans, Margaret. “Designing A Website For Evaluators Of Prior Learning Assessment,” presentation with ESC Evaluator Training Task Group, Empire State College, All College Conference, March 2010

Evans, Margaret. “Researching Critical Factors Impacting PLA Programs” Webinar presentation with Terry Hoffmann, Nan Travers and Amanda Treadwell, CAEL Webinar, January 2010


Evans, Margaret. “PLA Faculty/Specialist Evaluator Training,” double workshop, presentation with Nan Travers, Terry Hoffmann and Amanda Treadwell, National Institute on the Assessment of Adult Learning, Princeton, NJ, June 2009

Evans, Margaret. “Prior Learning Assessment Evaluator Website: where are we? where are we going?” presentation with ESC Evaluator Training Task Group, Empire State College, All College Conference, March 2009

Evans, Margaret. “Evaluator Training: Different Ways, Different Perspectives,” presentation with Nan Travers and Terry Hoffmann, CAEL International Conference, Philadelphia, PA, November 2008

Evans, Margaret. “PLA Evaluator Training: Different Ways, Different Perspectives,” presentation with Nan Travers, Gabrielle Dietzel and Terry Hoffmann, National Institute on Adult and Experiential Learning, Princeton, NJ, June 2008

Evans, Margaret. “PLA Evaluator Training: Issues and Opportunities,” workshop, National Institute on Adult and Experiential Learning, Princeton, NJ, June 2007


Michelson, Elana “Race, Difference, and Experiential Learning.” Plenary address to the International Consortium of Experiential Learning conference, University of Cape Town, July 1996.

Popova-Gonci, Viktoria and Travers, Nan “Concept Mapping PLAs as a Tool of Knowledge Creation and Sharing” National Institute for the Assessment of Adult Learning, June 15-17, 2011, AtlanticCity,NJ
Popova-Gonci and Jeffrey Lambe “Practicing Non-traditional Assessment Approaches within Traditional Academic Framework National Institute for the Assessment of Adult Learning, June11th,2010, AtlanticCity,NJ

Popova-Gonci, Viktoria “Challenges and Opportunities with a Non-Course Matching Assessment Model. National Institute for the Assessment of Adult Learning, June 11th, 2009, Princeton,NJ


Popova-Gonci, V. Dean, K., Evans, M, Travers, N Virtual Speed Dating For Recruiting and Training New PLA Evaluators at a Distance Panel Presentation: Forum on Assessing Adult Learning at a Distance, National Institute for the Assessment of Adult Learning, June 18th, 2008, Princeton, NJ