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It is All About Teaching and Learning

During the Fall 2021 semester, the Provost's office restarted the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) with funding from the Board of Governors equity initiatives. The purpose of the CTL in its current format is to develop, coordinate and implement student success and equity initiatives. It also provides instructors with programming and services designed to increase academic success for all students. Two co-directors provide leadership for the CTL. A full-time staff member manages the CTL's daily operations, and a part-time faculty member provides faculty leadership and perspective into learning.

The inaugural co-directors are Denise Henry, who has a strong background in public education and instructional technology, and Lynn Knight, assistant professor from the education department. The CTL utilizes a cadre of faculty members who serve for one year as Faculty Fellows. Fellows receive professional development as learning leaders and provide formal and informal collaborative professional learning sessions in their academic areas. Each fellow develops and facilitates monthly professional learning sessions to the campus and their academic areas centering on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) issues faced by students. Fellows will also facilitate DEI workshops and round-table discussions during the upcoming spring convocation. The CTL supports a fellow's individual interests in teaching and learning to support their positioning as professional learning leaders on campus. The CTL had a strong start with multiple efforts piloted or strengthened, including:

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semester in courses with historically high D,F or Withdrawal (DFW) rates. The CTL leadership partnered with BOT instructors to provide organizational support and personalized coaching. Coaching meetings focused on training instructors to design courses using nationally adopted rubrics and strategies for instruction and assessment backed by research. Recruitment for spring '22 BOT courses is underway with the intent to add six courses to the set of courses currently offered.

2. The CTL also provides support to faculty members at CSU Pueblo in a variety of forms, including:

a. Connecting with faculty who are new to CSU Pueblo in private meetings to provide onboarding and support. An onboarding course currently under development will be offered to all new instructors.

b. Offering "just in time" support with technology, course design, and active learning strategies through a collegial space for informal discussions about teaching and learning.

c. Coordinating professional development for faculty on DEI and strengthening students learning, study and metacognitive strategies.

d. Assisting faculty with technology-enhanced projects and lecture design through personalized professional development and coaching for instructors.

I appreciate the great start of the CTL and thank Lynn Knight for her service as inaugural faculty co-director for the CTL during the Fall semester. During the spring semester Professor of Italian, Chris Picicci, one of the first group of faculty fellows, will continue these efforts as interim co-director of the CTL.

-Mohamed Abdelrahman

Provost & Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs



FACULTY RECOGNITION

Karen Yescavage, professor of Psychology in the College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, participated in the newly launched Discovery Scholars program this year.

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Scholars project focuses on the impact of creative activity on psychological wellness.

With a cohort of six students, Yescavage will examine students in art, music and creative writing classes to see if their psychological well being improves from expressing themselves creatively. If successful, Yescavage hopes to expand this research to younger students in the community.



Through her teaching methods, Yescavage helps her students relax and learn in a variety of ways. She teaches her students to achieve creative wellness during classes. When introducing advanced concepts like neuroscience and the limbic system, Yescavage pulls out a blast from her students' past.

"I use Play-Doh," Yescavage explains. "We'll build the emotional parts of the brain. We can talk about emotions and how creative activity helps calm us down and expands our perspective. It brings it to life and students get excited about learning something that they've typically found very challenging."

Yescavage does not just teach psychological well-being. It is something that she practices on a daily basis. She brings that same energy and mindset to class every day to impart it to her students.

"I've always colored outside the lines," Yescavage said. "I like using improv as ice breakers at the beginning of the semester. Sometimes it's make a song up or make up a story. Students now have more social anxiety than ever and this helps reduce that."

"Literally, you have to have your brain relaxed to learn," Yescavage continued. "If you're nervous and stressed, your brain is not in the right place to learn."

Yescavage wants to continue to help students learn the importance of creative wellness and

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just got approval to create a creative wellness minor.

“I love the chair of my department,” Yescavage said. “She really inspired me to take that to the next level. I’ll be coordinating that minor and encouraging others to play and feel good about it.”

Yescavage earned the Faculty Award for Excellence for Teaching/Student Learning in 2021. Nominated by Director of World Languages and Professor of Spanish, Alegria Ribadeneira, Yescavage proudly displays her award on her desk.

“It moved me to tears,” Yescavage said. “I love being an educator. I love planting seeds in our next generation. I’ve been here long enough to have a whole generation of kids that are out in the community having an impact. There is nothing more rewarding than that.”

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Kwabena Simpey grew up in Accra, Ghana. Simpey knew he wanted to study in the U.S. in the hopes of becoming a doctor. He initially looked at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, but the small class sizes at CSU Pueblo appealed to him.

“I chose CSU Pueblo for the small class sizes,” Simpey said. “I just wanted to have that personal interaction with professors. Here it feels like everyone knows my name. I just like the sense of belonging here.”

Simpey arrived on campus not really knowing anyone and found himself in need of help in an unfamiliar place. That was when he visited the Science Learning Center and received the



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him.

“There was this student named Cameron Collins, who is now in medical school at Ohio State University,” Simpey said. “He tutored me in general chemistry. Every time I struggled, he stayed late to help me. He is the reason why I’m a tutor today.”

Now, Simpey also tutors in the Science Learning Center, giving underclassmen the same support he received when he was a freshman. Simpey provides help in chemistry and biology while also encouraging students.

“It wasn’t just help,” Simpey elaborated. “It’s also the encouragement from the upperclassmen. I want to do the same for other students. I know there are freshmen and sophomores just like me. It means so much to make an impact in their lives. You learn more when you teach. The more I help, the more I benefit because I learn more.”

In addition to his tutoring, Simpey has taken advantage of CSU Pueblo’s research opportunities since his freshman year. This hands-on experience has helped Simpey prepare for the next step in his academic journey.

“Since my freshman year, I have been involved in research,” Simpey said. “This is one of the opportunities that not every school has. At the big schools, it is very hard for an undergraduate to do research. Here we are given the opportunity to do our research and we own it.”

Simpey also serves on the Associated Students’ Government and participates in the Chemistry Club.

DISTINGUISHED UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR

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For those who were unable to take part in, Dr. Alegría Ribadeneira's Distinguished University Professor webinar, "On Serving Students Well: Insights from the Field of Heritage Language Teaching." held in November, you can still watch the video by clicking [here](#) or on the image below.



KEY DATES

12/16: Shania Myers Senior Recital / 7 p.m. / Hoag Hall



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