Editor's Introduction

While teaching at the University of Georgia—first as a graduate student and later as a faculty member with the Center for Teaching and Learning— I was always thinking about pedagogy and how to improve student learning. I read books and articles, talked with my colleagues from all over campus, went to teaching conferences, and even engaged in some informal "pints and pedagogy" events with my graduate students. I constantly thought about student learning and loved hearing about the inventive ways that colleagues tackled challenges in the classroom.

Now, as director of faculty development for the University System of Georgia, I am afforded a birds-eye view of the classroom, my interactions being mainly with faculty and with other educational development professionals. Though the scope of my work has changed, I remain an avid consumer of sound teaching practices, and it's exciting to have the opportunity to celebrate them in this book.

Each year, the University System of Georgia accepts nominations from the twenty-six institutions in the USG for the prestigious Regents' Awards for Excellence in Teaching. These nominees have been recognized by their provosts for doing exemplary work in the categories in which they have been nominated, and they represent the best of Georgia and the USG. Though we receive seventy to eighty excellent portfolios each year, only nine awards are given. Last year, Jeffery Galle, USG's Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, asked if we could find a way to honor all of these exceptional nominees, and thus *Engaged Student Learning: Essays on Best Practices in the University System of Georgia* was born.

This year, all Regents' Awards nominees were invited to submit a "best practices" piece highlighting student engagement in their face-to-face or online classroom. These essays, which went through a double-blind peer review process, represent all four institutional sectors in the USG: research universities, comprehensive universities, state universities, and state colleges. Authors are from a range of disciplines and their essays span from very specific, content-driven innovations to more broadly-applicable strategies that could be modified for many different classroom settings.

For example, in *Forensic Facial Reconstruction: Integration of Science and Art,* authors Marriott and Clark describe a two-semester long project where forensic science majors integrate history, anthropology, science, and art to create facial reconstructions from skulls, first focusing on the scientific literature to ascertain ethnicity, sex, and age, and eventually reconstructing faces based on these multidisciplinary resources.

In another example of a context-specific essay, Willox and Ponder describe a role-play activity in *UWGLive: Providing Simulated Classroom Experiences to Pre-Education Majors.* In this simulation, pre-service teachers have the opportunity to practice interactions with students and parents through online role-play, allowing them to receive guided feedback before entering an actual classroom. In each of these cases, instructors could simply model the behaviors they expect to see, but instead they ask the students to engage—and sometimes struggle—directly with the problems at hand, while experts standby to scaffold their learning.

Some essays outline general techniques that could be applied in a variety of contexts, from Utschig's *Team-Based Learning in Nuclear Engineering* to Trivedi's *Storytelling to Cultivate Growth Mindset and Social Belonging.* Others describe instructor-led behaviors and focus on how the organization and timing of the course activities (Joyner) or "meeting students where they are" (Loda) facilitates learning environments that help students meet their full potential.

When I read these essays, I can't help but imagine the events that sparked these classroom practices, the questions and wonderings that inspired these instructors try something new, and the conversations with

colleagues and students that led them to think, *what if…?* They speak to a commonality—that we want students to be actors in their learning, rather than spectators. As Terry Doyle says, "the one who does the work does the learning" (2008, p. 63). In other words, if we give students agency and create learning environments that encourage them to take on the work of organizing, planning, synthesizing, and creating, they will learn.

As you read these essays, I challenge you to consider the underlying constructs of these pedagogical strategies, to think about what aspects of them you might use to overcome challenges in the classroom, and determine how they could help your own students to learn and reach their full potential.

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