

Notes from the Life Sciences Carl Wieman Science Education Initiative

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Something to consider.

Final Exams are not that far off so it's time to consider the format. If you don't do so already, you might consider making the final either 'open book', or allowing the students to bring in a "cheat sheet" (for example, one page, double sided with anything they want written on it). The benefit is that it relieves the necessity to memorize 'factoids' and details. The cheat sheet in particular stimulates the process of creating an overview of what is important, as the students decided what to include. This process helps the students formulate the mental maps of the course subject that are necessary for long term retention. For the instructor it means you can ask questions that have detail in them, but it also means that you will tend to ask more conceptual or methodological questions. You can still ask 'factual questions', but they will tend to be more complex.

Students surveys find out some good news.

Jared Taylor carried out some focus groups with students from BIOL 201 this term investigating their study habits. His findings revealed that the students in the focus groups were very positive about the course. They liked the way it tied together information from other courses; they appreciated the extensive resources available, and felt the three instructors who teach the course were very interested in their learning. In particular they liked the "Green Book". This is a specialized set of lecture notes and supporting material (for example it includes a Chemistry supplement) that was prepared for the course by one of the instructors (Dr. Wade Bingle). The material in the Green Book is clear and more focused than in typical textbooks and students thought it should be replicated in other Biology courses. By the way, they also were very positive about the use of "clickers" in the class.

Yet Another STLF.

A new Science Teaching and Learning Fellow will be joining the LS-CWSEI in June. Dr. Randal Mindell will be joining the other STLFs starting in the summer. Randal received his B.Sc. degree at UBC and is finishing his Ph.D. at the University of Alberta. His thesis is in the area of paleobotany and he has been the recipient of numerous awards during his graduate studies.

Carl Wieman Talk.

Dr. Carl Wieman, Director of the CWSEI will be giving a talk "What every instructor should know about learning", to be held on **Wednesday, March 19th, from 12 to 1pm** in IK Barber Learning Centre This talk will provide an overview of research on learning that has come from cognitive psychology, brain research, and education. This work provides some basic general principles of how learning is achieved.

We're around.

If you're interested in talking to us about your course(s), or teaching /learning, feel free to contact anyone of your LS-CWSEI team: Tamara Kelly <tjkelly@zoology.ubc.ca>, Jared Taylor <jtaylor@zoology.ubc.ca>, Harald Yurk <yurk@zoology.ubc.ca>, Gulnur Birol <Birol@science.ubc.ca>, George Spiegelman <spie@interchange.ubc.ca>. You might also check out the CWSEI website for information and resources about teaching/learning: <http://www.cwsei.ubc.ca>.