Are We Having Fun Yet?

Dr. Margaret H. Venable

A chemistry laboratory class can be very intense and intimidating to the first year student, especially when students are doing their first titration, watching for that elusive endpoint. It is so easy to slip and overshoot the mark. At the end of the day, though, a chemistry lab class is about learning the techniques and understanding the theories. We are not curing cancer in these experiments. And so sometimes as I walked the lab and felt the tension in the room mount during a challenging experiment, I would suddenly announce to the class, “Are you having fun?” Some students would look up at me quizzically and others seemed to ignore me entirely. I continued, “Because if you aren’t having fun, you aren’t doing it right!” That generally broke the tension in the room and generated a few quiet laughs.

I know we are all juggling so many commitments these days. We are by nature overachievers and perfectionists which is why we have spent our lives in the academic environment. As we watch our take home pay continue to decline, we also note that our out of pocket expenses and workloads continue to increase. As I survey the campus at this time of the semester, I want to say both to each of you and to myself, “Are we having fun? Because if we aren’t having fun, we aren’t doing it right!” Are you still having fun with your work? If not, I’m guessing your students and colleagues can tell. If so, I suspect that also is evident.

In our last newsletter, I challenged each of us to take risks and make bold mistakes. We will all inevitably make mistakes, so why not make bold ones in the process of taking calculated risks? I want to extend that theme by challenging you to make a point of having fun in your work. Yes, even during committee meetings and while grading papers. What is it that excites you about your job? How could you get more of that into your life? We spend too many hours and take home too little profit to be doing this for the glamor or the financial gain. So why do we do what we do? For me, the answer is because it brings meaning to my life. I believe in what I am doing. I believe I can make a difference in the lives of our students, even the ones who never meet me. Making a difference is what matters to me. Do I enjoy every minute of my job? Of course not. Would I trade it for a pot of gold? Absolutely not.

Why are you in this business? Why at Gordon? How can you rekindle that passion and that childlike joy you once had if it has faded? Would your students notice the difference? Would your friends and family notice? Just food for thought. In the meantime, I hope you will challenge me to have more fun too!

On a more serious note, please let me know if you are doing something interesting in your classes that you would like for me to observe. I do miss the classroom and would love to know more about what our students and faculty are doing.
Thank you for your thoughtful responses to the poll regarding the Interim Dean of Arts & Sciences position. After careful consideration of your feedback, I have decided to conduct an external search. It is important to ensure we have the best possible person in this critical role and to ensure that the faculty have the opportunity to participate in the selection of their dean. The position will be posted as soon as possible and a search committee will be announced. Internal candidates are certainly encouraged to apply. Thanks again to all who took the time to give careful reflection and input on this matter.

Arts and Sciences Faculty
Dr. Margaret Venable

Is your advisee best served by taking MATH 1111 or would MATH 1001 be a better fit?
The system wide mathematics advisory group suggests that many students would be better served by taking MATH 1001.
The success rates in MATH 1001 are generally higher than in MATH 1111 (which leads to improvement in overall student success) and mathematicians feel that students who will not be taking calculus are better served by a more applications based course than the traditional college algebra course. Take a look at your advisee’s SAT/ACT scores, ask them about their career goals and consider advising them to take MATH 1001 if that seems to make sense.

Intrusive Advising Webinar
One-third of all undergraduate students leave college after their first year of college, risking their academic futures and hurting institutions' enrollment numbers.

Academic advisers are in a unique position to reach these students during the critical first two semesters of college, addressing students' personal and academic challenges before they disconnect from higher education. “Intrusive advising,” also known as “proactive advising,” is a method by which advisers anticipate at-risk students' needs and connect them to the appropriate resources on campus early in their college experience.

All faculty advisors are invited to join us for the “Intrusive Advising to Improve Student Success” webcast, hosted by Joe Murray, Director of University Advising Services at Florida Atlantic University. This workshop will cover the history and theory of intrusive advising, as well as best practices for student retention, at-risk students, and students on probation.

When: Thursday, March 27th from 1:00-2:30
Where: The Foundation Room in the Student Center!
Work From the Task Force for Academic Progress

Dr. Richard Baskin

Last fall, the Task Force, composed of faculty and staff from across the college, developed a number of ideas for encouraging student engagement and success in academics. Our theme was to build on the good work that we already do to help students stay in college and earn a degree. Subcommittees in the areas of advising, engagement, measurement, learning support, policies, and services worked hard on their recommendations for initiatives and improvements. These recommendations have been or will be presented to the appropriate Senate or campus-wide committee or to an administrative office, as appropriate. President Burns and Provost Venable appreciate the time and effort these folks have put into this important work.

Adult Learning Consortium Meeting here on February 24

Next Monday, the meeting of the Adult Learning Consortium Executive Committee will be held on the Gordon State campus. Gordon has five representatives on this committee, which directs progressive efforts towards meeting the needs of adult learners at 13 USG institutions. The day-long meeting will be held in the Collaborative Learning Room in the Nursing and Allied Health Building. If you have the opportunity, I hope that you will welcome our colleagues from around the System.

Accel Students at Gordon

Dr. Richard Baskin

The number of bright and engaged students from the ranks of dual-credit high school students continues to grow at our college. With the growth in the number of students comes challenges in registration, assuring state financial aid, advising, class scheduling, and continuing academic support. I am pleased to report to you that Gordon staff and academic leadership have held multiple meetings with our counterparts at local high schools to improve those processes, to everyone’s benefit. The conversation continues, with the intention of making the way smoother from this spring on.
Sharing Information Through Connect@

Dr. Richard Baskin

The Task Force for Academic Progress heard from faculty and staff who would like to see an improved forum for better communication and understanding of collective work across the campus, a means of asking questions and sharing information that is more direct and visible, and therefore quicker and more likely to be used, than the existing forum. The Task Force believes that improved communication will provide greater accuracy and clarity in the information needed in our work. Questions can be asked about policies, procedures, and actions taken.

To help achieve this goal, we have set up an email account, connect@gordonstate.edu. Email sent to this account will be forwarded to both the Staff Council President, currently Mr. Justin White, and the Faculty Senate President, currently Dr. Lynn Rumfelt. These folks, who volunteered to facilitate, will track down the answers and respond to the senders, then see that the questions and answers are published through GSConnect. In addition, they will go over the questions and answers at Staff Council and Faculty Senate meetings.

LibGuides at Hightower Library

Ms. Brenda Rutherford

As part of the Affordable Learning Georgia initiative, Hightower Library now has LibGuides on the library web page. LibGuides may be accessed on the “Electronic Resources” page for the library. You may be wondering what a LibGuide is. A LibGuide provides library resource and research information for a particular subject or course. A LibGuide may be customized by a librarian to match a particular course. All LibGuides currently available may be accessed at the following url: http://libguides.gordonstate.edu/scienceandtechnology. Any faculty desiring to have a LibGuide designed for his or her course, should contact the library via email, phone, or in person.
Honors Program Achievements

Dr. David Janssen

The Gordon State College Honors Program was well represented at the Georgia Collegiate Honors Council last week. Ahmed Foggie, Wendy Giere-Frye, Stephanie Hogg, Debbie Vaughan, and Samantha Watt all presented papers at the conference.

Congratulations to Wendy, who won the first-place prize for Best Paper in the Social Sciences. With Stephanie Hogg’s winning paper in the Humanities last year, we’re clearly on a roll. Here’s hoping for a “three-peat” next year!

Upcoming Performance

The Delphi Trio will perform on February 25 as part of the GSC Recital Series. They are a violin, cello, piano trio and will perform works of Faure, Brahms, and Schubert. 7:30 p.m. in the Fine Arts Auditorium.

Honors Program Admission Deadline

Dr. David Janssen

Our next deadline is March 1. Please encourage qualified students to apply in order to take advantage of the academic and social opportunities that the Honors Program offers.

For new students with less than 12 credit hours, a score of 1150 on the SAT or 24 on the ACT is required as well as a 3.2 high-school GPA.

For current students with at least 12 credit hours, a minimum 3.5 GPA is required as well as a letter of recommendation from a faculty member.

Applications details and forms can be found here: http://www.gordonstate.edu/admissions/advanced/honors/index.asp
More Exciting News from the Department of Humanities

Dr. Steve Raynie


Issue 306 of the journal edited by Dr. Davis, The SFRA Review, was published.

Dr. Doug Davis received a President’s Initiative Summer Grant to visit Flannery O’Connor’s scholarly archives and to work on his book *MS, Technological Distances: Reading Flannery O’Connor in the Future*.

Dr. Davis’ conference paper, “A Tale of Two Futures: Reading Flannery O’Connor’s ‘The Displaced Person’ Through Cold War Science and Technology Studies” has been accepted for presentation at the Society for the Study of Southern Literature annual meeting this March.

Dr. Davis’ proposal, “Teaching Flannery O’Connor Through Science and Technology Studies,” has been accepted for the forthcoming volume from the Modern Language Association Press, Approaches to Teaching the Works of Flannery O’Connor.

News from the Department of Math and Physical Science

Dr. Allen Fuller


Dr. Schmude also judged science fair projects at Spalding County High School on January 17, 2014 and served as a referee for a paper titled “Connecting Algebra and Geometry for Extraneous Roots” a paper submitted to the Georgia Journal of Science.

On February 7, 2014 Dr. Schumude attended the SoTL (scholarship in Teaching and Learning) workshop.

**Dr. Marwan Zabdawi** was a judge at the Griffin RESA Regional Engineering and Science Fair, on 2/11/14. He will also serve as a judge for the Henry County High School Science Fair at Heritage park in McDonough, on 2/27/14.

**Dr. Bernard Anderson**’s article “Degrees that are not degrees of categoricity”, written with Dr. Barbara Csima, was accepted for publication in the *Notre Dame Journal of Formal Logic*. This paper has been presented by Dr. Anderson or his coauthor at the annual meeting of the Association of Symbolic Logic (Berkeley, CA) and a sectional meeting of the American Mathematical Society (Washington, DC).