A Deeper Look at CETL

The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning indirectly influences students in the classroom. Interim Director Robert Eierman’s goal is to address professional development issues, and to help educators grow and become better teachers in every phase of their career.

Eierman believes there are university professors who “haven’t had very many developmental experiences regarding how to design, structure, teach, and assess learning.” Therefore, CETL serves as a resource for educators to enhance those skills.

“If we can help educators learn how to create effective assessments, we have been successful,” says Eierman. CETL also offers support to educators who feel that they have to refocus, or who feel their teaching has stagnated.

A private donation of $100,000 was used to develop CETL. A primary resource CETL offers educators is space for programming. CETL can accommodate meetings for small and large groups. It is also equipped with a kitchen where coffee, tea, and food can be served. “We were able to renovate this space in a way that could be a very coherent, carefully designed, flexible space,” states Eierman.

Educators who are interested in improving some aspect of their teaching have come forward and expressed ideas of how Learning Communities (LC) and Communities of Practice (COP) can help improve classroom atmosphere.

“We meet with educators who propose an LC or COP and discuss whether their program is aligned with the Strategic Plan and the goals of the university,” explains Eierman. Once an LC or COP is created, CETL invites educators who are interested in the topics being discussed to join those communities.

Although CETL has seen success, “it has been challenging to envision what the potential of this organization is, create its identity, and then spread our message to the rest of the university,” says Eierman.

Educators are invited to come to CETL and relax. As an experienced professor, Eierman believes it is a great comfort for educators to have a place where they can escape to.
IDIS 301 Online

Dr. Susan Moch (Nursing) and Dr. Robert Tomlinson (Psychology) have been co-teaching an online interdisciplinary course that is offered during winterim and interim.

Interdisciplinary Studies 301 is a course that allows students to explore how their minds and bodies are interconnected. Initially, the course was offered in a traditional face-to-face setting, but it eventually evolved into an online-only course.

Moch and Tomlinson were intrigued by the Desire2Learn technology, and this was their chance to try out a new teaching technique: “We thought we could have access to more students from various backgrounds and different ages.”

And indeed they did! Students from outside of Wisconsin as well as from different parts of Wisconsin have been able to take this course because it is offered online.

Moch and Tomlinson have the challenging task of learning how to keep students engaged in this online-only course. One successful method to keep students engaged is through group projects. They are helpful because students learn how important an individual’s obligations are to the rest of the group. Together, groups work to compile research papers that encompass all of their separate pieces.

Group activities allow students to become aware of the value of their work, along with their classmates’. Students are constantly engaged with their classmates because they are responsible for commenting on each others’ writings and learning experiences.

IDIS 301 promotes a multidimensional understanding of the course content. Moch and Tomlinson believe the course is relevant to many disciplines because “students develop their written communication skills and share experiences and knowledge of their discipline.”

Students in IDIS 301 develop writing skills, research strategies, and learn how to synthesize their research findings. Over several semesters, Moch and Tomlinson have found that “students teach each other many of these skills.”

To encourage learning from different perspectives, there are articles, websites, and audio-visuals made available to students on D2L.

These classmates may never meet in person, so Moch and Tomlinson assign a project, in which each student contributes a short biography about themselves. These projects are available online so that the entire class can learn about their classmates’ lives outside of the course.

Teaching assistants (TAs), whom Moch refers to as teaching apprentices, have been quite useful to the course. “We spend time with the teaching apprentices to identify their learning objectives and to learn their perspectives,” explained Moch.

TAs share their previous experiences of the class with students, and they help advise students on how to improve their writing and research skills, and how to navigate the online technology.

TAs also play a role in improving future courses. “The class is more effective and interesting because of [their] input,” said Moch.

While they were surprised about the time needed to put into running the course, co-teaching IDIS 301 has been an exciting experience for Moch and Tomlinson. “Teaching together is great fun,” Moch said. “We enjoy talking about philosophical and ethical issues related to teaching.”

While both do enjoy the online format of the course, they “miss being with the students and getting to know them in the more traditional face-to-face manner.” However, they do get to know the students through the online format.”

Have an article idea?

Do you have an idea for a teaching and learning topic? Would you like to read more about certain topics?

Send your comments and ideas our way! Email us at: cetl@uwec.edu or stop in at The Center.

We are located in OL 1142. CETL looks forward to hearing from you!
Student Oral Presentations

Biology professor Dr. Sasha Showsh believes that oral presentations improve student learning. He teaches an undergraduate seminar which consists of students researching a specific topic that is familiar to the student, followed by an oral presentation. Students find his methods fun and his preparation tips are effective.

Showsh engages students by having the class participate in a discussion on the aspects of a high-quality presentation.

When students take what they learn in the classroom and then apply that knowledge to the real world, they retain their knowledge longer.

“Don’t underestimate the amount of work required for a good presentation.”

The main focus of oral presentations is to have students learn independently outside the classroom. By applying their knowledge, they better understand how the content of their learning actually affects them outside of the classroom.

It is important for all students to be exposed to public speaking, especially students who may very likely give presentations on their own research findings in future careers. Communication skills are necessary for success in the workforce.

Unfortunately, presentations become problematic when students are unprepared. Many times, students do not designate the appropriate amount of time to research their topics, prepare their visual aids, and practice their presentations.

Specifically in Biology 385 this past Fall semester, he asked students to present for 5 minutes on one topic they were all experts in: themselves. Each student was videotaped during these initial presentations.

In a following class meeting, the students watched the short videos of themselves and their classmates. Afterwards, they provided constructive criticism to each other.

Showsh believes this method of preparation is advantageous because “presenters [have] a chance to practice in front of an audience and actually see what mistakes they [make] before getting ready for the final presentation.”

Although each student received feedback on their 5-minute presentation, Showsh feels that students are still under-prepared for their final presentations: “They don’t research the topic well enough [until] they are comfortable talking about it.”

The final presentation in Showsh’s course involved each student giving a 40-minute formal presentation to the class. Some of the tips he gives students revolve around the introduction and conclusion.

Showsh believes a strong introduction contains an overview along with an outline of the presentation. Conclusions then must highlight and summarize important points from the presentation. Showsh pays special attention to these areas during student presentations.

Showsh’s advice to students preparing for presentations is: “Don’t underestimate the amount of work required for a good presentation.”

Remember... Good Practice in Education:

1. Encourages contact with students.
2. Develops reciprocity and cooperation among students.
5. Emphasizes time on task.
6. Communicates high expectations.
7. Respects diverse talents and ways of learning.

(Adapted from http://honolulu.hawaii.edu)
The Learning Enhancement and Progression (LEAP) serves local students who have academic or social difficulty.

The clinic started in 1980, and Vicki Snider (Special Education) became the coordinator in 1989. Her goal is “to provide a successful environment for kids who are not successful in school.”

Students in kindergarten through third grade make up the majority of the clinic’s clients, with about 1/3 having been diagnosed with a disability.

LEAP clients are grouped at a level where they can be successful and still challenged. These levels are determined by testing and with parental and teacher input.

Definite improvements, while others return at the same level they had been at last summer,” says Snider.

The clinic allows UWEC to reach out to the community because students seeking certification in special education serve as clinic instructors.

Graduate and undergraduate students serve as clinic instructors, but the clinic is currently primarily staffed by undergraduates.

Having UWEC students serve as instructors greatly benefits the teacher-education program. “The clinic provides a model of best practices,” explains Snider.

Snider believes the LEAP clinic provides students with a unique teaching model. She wants future teachers to understand that with the right kind of instruction, students can succeed.

Snider speaks positively of the benefits the clinic offers: “Most summer school programs don’t have the skilled personnel that we do. The LEAP clinic also offers a small teacher-to-pupil ratio.”

The LEAP clinic takes what UWEC students learn in their classrooms and gives them the opportunity to apply their knowledge. They give struggling students in the clinic “an extra boost,” says Snider.

Undergraduate instructors have a lot of responsibility, but they do receive support. However, they are not financially compensated for their instruction. In fact, 3 summer courses at UWEC provide instructors for the clinic. There is a constant presence of co-directors, and experienced teachers are hired for 3 weeks to support the clinic instructors.

Both clinic instructors and clients are placed in challenging situations. One former instructor provided the following message to future instructors: “You will be overwhelmed at first, but don’t worry; you will be happy again.”

Clinic instructors learn skills that help them become better teachers. Snider describes the aspirations she has for the undergraduates: “I hope [instructors] learn how to teach academic skills, the value of success, how to motivate students, and how to collect data on student performance.”

The only drawback to the LEAP clinic is that it is very time-consuming. Snider states, “I spend 8 hours a day during the summer focusing on the clinic,” but she added that “working in the clinic keeps me grounded so that I always have one foot in the real world.”

Over the years, the clinic has been held at various schools throughout the Eau Claire School District, with Roosevelt Elementary School having hosted the program since 2004. The LEAP clinic is a collaborative effort with the Eau Claire community and has been a part of the Eau Claire Summer School program since 2006.

The 5-week program costs each client $90. However, if they attend Eau Claire area schools, $50 is covered by the school district. There are 10 free spots reserved for students from Roosevelt Elementary. The last clinic session filled just 4 hours after registration opened.
Civil Rights Pilgrimage: Jodi Thesing-Ritter’s Perspective

The UWEC Civil Rights Pilgrimage first took place during Spring Break 2008. The second trip took place this past January 2009 during winterim, and the third trip took place March 13-22, 2009. The inspiration for this trip came from January Boten (former Putnam Hall Director). Boten approached Jodi Thesing-Ritter (Associate Dean of Students) for assistance in coordinating the pilgrimage, and Thesing-Ritter accepted the invitation.

What began as an alternative to the “drink ‘til you drop” spring break has become a life-altering experience for instructors and students. Thesing-Ritter truly believes in the pilgrimage. She declares, “Throughout the campus, we are meeting individual student needs and curricular needs because we are increasing the understanding of diversity issues among our students.”

Participating students are engaged in the trip because they set learning outcomes for themselves. The learning outcomes have helped Thesing-Ritter tailor the trip to include several aspects that students are interested in, such as service learning and course credit. New opportunities are offered while student needs are met.

Much of the pilgrimage is set up to help students understand how the grassroots of activism were created during the civil rights movement. Students may see that they are also capable of standing up for the issues that concern them. Not only will students learn about activism; they will also “learn about geography… so they can get to see where we fit. Physical geography is really cool, and they have fun,” exclaims Thesing-Ritter.

Thesing-Ritter has become aware of how little students know about Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, and others who fought for justice alongside them. During the pilgrimage, students learn the historical roots of racism: “They don’t understand the multifaceted issues of racism, but they leave with a better understanding of the issues people face today.”

The pilgrimage is important for all the participants involved. “It’s tough to be challenged about your core beliefs….It is hard to construct a challenge on [the UWEC] campus when you’re rubbing elbows with people who are so familiar to you all the time,” says Thesing-Ritter.

She hopes this experience will help students unlearn some of the beliefs they have been influenced by and help them see alternative perceptions: “The experiences force students to think differently, in ways that challenge their core beliefs.” By placing students in different environments, Thesing-Ritter hopes to inspire students’ desire to know more and to take action.

Every time she returns from a trip, Thesing-Ritter is hopeful: “Racism hurts on this campus and in this entire world, but to have people think about it for ten days has to inspire some change in them.”

Students who participated in a previous pilgrimage are put in charge of coordinating the upcoming trip. Their responsibilities include making reservations, assisting in planning the itinerary, and leading small groups of students during the trip. Students are conducting research, analyzing data, and completing a research report that will be presented on Student Research Day.

Participants from the winterim trip are working hard to attend a conference in San Diego, California. Thesing-Ritter states: “We’ve submitted a grant proposal for the NCORE (National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in Education) at the end of May. [The students] have also submitted scholarship requests to participate in a 24-hour curriculum at the conference.” She believes these opportunities offer amazing experiences for students.

Although Thesing-Ritter would like as many students as possible to have the chance to take part in this pilgrimage, cost is a prevalent issue. “The trip costs double what we charge students,” explains Thesing-Ritter. “It is my desire to

Thesing-Ritter continued on pg 6
Thesing-Ritter is taking part in a CETL Community of Practice through the EDI Quick WINS grant. “We want to explore the potential of increasing emerging experiences across the curriculum,” she says. The COP is also exploring how to introduce EDI issues into the curriculum.

A new aspect of the 2009 Spring Break trip is that professors are being invited to take part in the pilgrimage. “I’m hopeful that professors can incorporate this kind of idea into the curriculum,” says Thesing-Ritter.

The trip requires support from the UWEC Foundation. If students continue to show interest in planning, and if professors are willing to facilitate the trip, Thesing-Ritter is hopeful that this model can be continued in the future. She declares, “Everybody has to have this kind of transformative experience.”

Civil Rights Pilgrimage: Student Perspectives

Students have incredible things to say about the Civil Rights Pilgrimage. During the ten-day trip, students visit museums and historical sites, explore the cities, and interact with locals.

When asked to describe their experience in one word, students replied with “inspiring.”

“Nothing I learned on this trip could have been taught to me in a classroom by a professor with a textbook and whiteboard,” says Stephen Chagdes, who went on the pilgrimage in January 2009. The trip taught Chagdes to be “more sensitive and understanding of diversity and all cultures.” This experience also taught him that UWEC needs more multicultural students, and he would like to see the university attract more diverse students.

Sarah Gonzalez looks back on the experience with complete satisfaction: “I was very surprised how little I had learned about the Civil Rights Movement and those who were involved in it from my earlier years of education…. I learned so much more from this trip than I could have from any book.”

Michael Ross said, “I feel a newfound hope for future change and a drive to help make it [happen],” and he has been working to remove stereotypes he has, as well as the stereotypes others may hold.

The students offered some guidance to give to those who participated on the trip during Spring Break 2009. “Immerse yourself and soak in all the information,” says Ross. “Let the experience come to you and don’t reject any part of it,” advises Chagdes. Gonzalez urges students to “be open to new possibilities and perspectives, excited to meet new people and see new places you may not have visited otherwise, and be ready to learn!”

Chagdes provided some thoughtful words about Jodi Thesing-Ritter.

“Jodi was an amazing trip coordinator. She really should be praised for her hard work and efforts to help students to become more aware of the world we live in. It’s super easy to fall into the trap of thinking Eau Claire and Wisconsin are the way the world operates and exists. There is a world outside of the Midwest, and it should be explored and understood by more students; Jodi did a great job of helping us see that perspective.”
Colleague Recognition

Cindy Albert, CETL Instructional Designer, recognizes Dr. Katherine Rhoades as a role model for women who are pursuing leadership roles or administrative positions in their career. “She has accomplished so much,” exclaims Albert, who lists caring and supportive as some of Rhoades’s qualities.

Albert admires Rhoades for accepting challenges that come her way, and for her open-mindedness. She states, “[Rhoades] really listens and went out of her way to help me feel like I belonged in the college.”

In 2007, Rhoades retired as Dean of the College of Education and Human Sciences (CoEHS). She was asked to return and serve a two-year part-time appointment as Interim Coordinator of Women’s Studies. “When I was asked to come back, it truly felt as if I was going full circle and coming home,” says Rhoades.

Rhoades began her doctoral studies after her three children completed high school. At the University of Wisconsin-Madison, she enrolled in an Educational Policy Studies program. Rhoades also minored in women’s studies and anthropology.

After receiving her Ph.D. in 1996, Rhoades accepted a position in the women’s studies program at UWEC. She subsequently became a Professor in the Department of Foundations of Education, and eventually served as Associate Dean of the School of Education before she became Dean of CoEHS.

On Teaching

When Rhoades first began teaching, she felt she had a great deal of knowledge to share with her students. One significant lesson she learned is that teaching is not about only lecturing, but about engaging students at their own level of learning. She is passionate about teaching and states, “I now think about teaching as opening the world of learning.”

“Teaching is an art as well as a science,” Rhoades explains. “The best teachers are constantly reflective and have a constant re-visioning of how they can better meet students’ learning needs.”

Interactions with students have influenced Rhoades’s pedagogy. She has learned how to pay attention and listen to students and now understands that change is part of any learning process.

Rhoades has seen students enter her courses with misconceptions, and experience taught Rhoades that students understand the world through what she refers to as a “gendered and multicultural lens.”

Rhoades has also experienced some challenges while teaching women’s studies courses. Her most challenging task has been “inviting students to have boundless thinking, not to be constricted by previous prejudices, and to allow themselves to fly freely in the world of ideas.”

Gaining students’ trust and persuading them to succeed has been a rewarding experience. Rhoades believes “the challenge in teaching is to develop a trust with students so that they will go somewhere that they haven’t been before.” She has seen that students learn best from immersion experiences, and she offers some advice to educators early in their career: “You can’t just describe...”
Rhoades continued from pg 7

the water. You have to get students in it and have them swim in it.”

Classroom Experiences

At the end of women’s studies courses, Rhoades expects students to be critical thinkers about gender and multicultural issues. To help students reach her goal, she has taught a variety of courses on power, privilege, and inequality.

This semester, Rhoades is teaching Women’s Studies 490: Feminist Theories and Practices. Students in the class are working on oral history projects, interviewing some of the individuals who contributed to the development and success of UWEC’s women’s studies program. Students will create digital stories about these individuals’ lives, and develop an exhibit for display in the McIntyre Library.

The students will also present their research at the Wisconsin Oral History Day Conference, which will be held at UWEC April 26-27. Rhoades insists that “you have to move students’ work beyond the confines of a classroom and get into the community, and vice versa.”

In another course, students read memoirs written by people of color, people living in poverty, and people with disabilities. Students created scripts from their readings and performed a reader’s theater at Borders bookstore. “It was a powerful experience,” exclaims Rhoades. “[Students] were amazed by the power of their participation, and how important it was to take their work outside of the university and engage community members in conversations about gender and multiculturalism.”

In her Social Foundations of Human Relations course, Rhoades developed a partnership with a high school in Prince George’s County, Maryland, to help students better understand the concept of multiculturalism. The students travelled to Maryland and spent one week immersed in a high school. Rhoades explains, “When the students were immersed in an experience that allowed them to have intercultural experiences, they benefited. They learned more in twenty minutes than I could have taught them in an entire semester.”

An Interconnected Discipline

The women’s studies minor was established at UWEC in 1984, and the major was introduced in 2006. “I think [these are] very important milestones, not only for gender, but also for race and social class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation,” says Rhoades. She believes that women’s studies promotes human rights and social justice.

Celebrating Women’s Studies

In the Women’s Studies Capstone, Rhoades creates an environment where students share their research projects, critique each other’s work, and offer support to classmates. Each student designed a research project, and their results will be presented at a capstone colloquium.

Rhoades invites members of the university, Eau Claire community, and students’ families to the colloquium. It is scheduled for May 6, 2009 at 4:00pm in the Council Fire Room of Davies. The colloquium is combined with the 25th anniversary of the women’s studies minor. Rhoades is excited about the success of women’s studies: “I really think it’s thriving,” she says.

On Life

Teaching has been a fulfilling career for Rhoades: “I’m amazed at the number of students who refer back to a class on gender and multiculturalism that has helped them to understand the world,” she exclaims.

Rhoades admits that teaching makes her feel alive, motivates her thinking, and allows her to grow. She constantly asks of herself, Did student’s learn? If so, how do I know that? She feels these are questions that will occupy her for a lifetime.

Rhoades believes “knowledge is essential for teaching, and wisdom is also equally important, but it takes time to cultivate a wisdom that enhances teaching.”

Rhoades hopes to continue establishing her identity even after her time at UWEC is over. “I will always crave having a life of the mind, whether that’s writing, reading, or teaching. I would like to think that I will still be generating ideas and that I will be engaged in teaching in one way or another.”
What’s Going On?
The Thailand Project at UW-Stevens Point

The University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point has committed to improving equity, diversity, and inclusion on their campus. One student’s initiative was enough to create a positive impact on others’ lives across the globe.

Joseph Quinnell, a student at UWSP, hoped to spark social change through his photography. Quinnell travelled to Thailand to photograph the living situations, and he returned with the mindset to take action against human trafficking.

The Thailand Project arose out of Quinnell’s encounter with the Development and Education Programme for Daughters and Communities (DEPDC), a non-profit organization that is located in Thailand and works to prevent the sale of women and children into prostitution and slavery.

With Quinnell’s insistence, a short term study abroad session was created at UWSP to provide students the opportunity to travel to Thailand during winterim for arts education.

The UWSP campus then wanted to bring over individuals served by the DEPDC and give them an education at UWSP, which would help provide a successful future for the DEPDC students.

After receiving support from the United States Consulate in Chiang Mai, the Thai government also permitted students to leave and return to the country after completion of their studies.

A fundraiser was created to raise the money necessary to bring individuals from the DEPDC over to UWSP. During just a one-week period, Quinnell and over 160 UWSP student volunteers raised $12,000.

Aor Saokhamnuan and Fongtip Boonsri were the first two students to arrive from the DEPDC. The girls are currently working on their English language skills, and look forward to beginning school as college freshman in Fall 2009.

Saokhamnuan wants to create awareness of DEPDC’s efforts and the human rights violations in Thailand. Boonsri aspires to become a counselor at the DEPDC and help improve students’ futures. She states that there are many students currently involved with the DEPDC who are not provided with sufficient guidance to lead successful lives.

At DEPDC, students are provided an education, vocational training, and lodging. It also serves as a refuge for abused children and a safe haven for women who are seeking protection after leaving the sex industry.

Quinnell’s photography was displayed on the UWSP campus to create awareness about human trafficking in the UWSP community. Afterwards, the photos were exhibited throughout other UW-campuses and Wisconsin businesses.

Director of the Foreign Students Office at UWSP, Dr. Brad Van Den Elzen believes UWSP’s role in fighting human trafficking is making a positive impact for everyone involved. Van Den Elzen says The Thailand Project is “tremendously gratifying” and “an amazing accomplishment.”

Dr. Erik Yonke, Director of International Programs at UWSP, feels that The Thailand Project will create many opportunities for UWSP students.

UWSP’s Vice Chancellor Dr. Bob Tomlinson is proud to see that “students...are making a statement about human rights and human trafficking,” whether or not they can afford to travel to Thailand.

With private funds, advocates for The Thailand Project hope to obtain support for future students from the DEPDC to study at UWSP.

CETL would like to acknowledge UWSP for taking a stand on supporting equity, diversity, and inclusion. CETL is also focused on improving these issues on the UWEC campus.

Sources used to generate this article: http://www.uwsp.edu/design08/videoplayer/video.aspx?&id=&item=0&playlist=playlist.xml and http://www.depdc.org
Recognize a Colleague!

How do you or someone you know impact student learning? Let us know! Please provide a brief explanation so that we can acknowledge the classroom success.

Nominate a colleague or yourself!

Send nominations and inquiries to CETL, Old Library 1142, or email us at cetl@uwec.edu.

CETL News!

Curriculum Development Grant

Nine educators received a Curriculum Development Grant, which was made possible through Differential Tuition from student funds. CETL would like to congratulate the following educators and their student collaborators who will be working to improve courses on the UWEC campus:

- **James Walker** Mathematics
  - Lara Conrad
  - Laurie Zakrzewski

- **Wendy Geniuz** Am Indian Studies
  - Paul Ganas
  - Megan Gust
  - Andy Tabbut
  - Lyndsay Nelson
  - Robert Hart
  - Hickory Tate

- **David Jones** English
  - Jacqueline Kress
  - Chris Malina
  - Tamika Marchbanks

- **Kate Hinnant** English
  - Jessica Thornton
  - Alysha Feldcamp

- **Emily Krusack** English
  - Valerie Lunderville
  - Emily Wuest

- **JoAnne Juett** English
  - Kathrynn Maurer

- **Gary Don** Music
  - Christiane Stagg
  - Paul Saganski

- **Ellen Mahaffy** Comm & Journalism
  - Kim Acheson
  - Jenny You

- **Jan Larson** Comm & Journalism
  - Laura Sukowatey
  - Kailey Mezera

Faculty College

The University of Wisconsin-System Faculty College 2009, sponsored by the UW System Office of Professional and Instructional Development (OPID), will be held on the UW-Richland campus, May 26-29, 2009. Educators will take part in intensive workshops on teaching, learning, and curricular issues.

The following educators are attending this professional development opportunity:

- **Vicki Samelson** Comm Sci & Disorders
- **Kelly Murray** Biology
- **Angela Dalhoe** Special Education
- **Eric Jamelske** Economics

If funding is available, these alternate educators will be able to attend:

- **Mary Canales** Nursing and **Sanjukta Chaudhuri** Economics.

Wisconsin Teaching Scholar **Jenny Shaddock**, English and Wisconsin Teaching Fellow **Jessica Miller**, Foreign Languages will also be present at the event, along with Bob Eierman, CETL Interim Director who will be serving as an OPID evaluator.

Congratulations to all educators who are attending this esteemed event!