

Counselor Back from Employment (College) Exchange



by Judy Murphy
Counselor, Student Careers and Development

I have just returned from my employment exchange experience at Mount Royal College. It was an experience that I would highly recommend to any faculty member!

Arrangements

Although several people have made arrangements through the Canadian College Exchange program organized through the Human Resources Department, my opportunity came to me by a more informal method.

Initial Contact

I was approached by Dr. Mitchell Clark last Christmas (1996) at a social function. I didn't know Mitch at that time but had had some contact with the Mount Royal College Social Services Department. Mitch is a psychologist who instructs in the Community Rehabilitation Program at MRC. He wanted to refresh his counselling skills with persons with disabilities. I am a social worker by background and have been counselling and coordinating services for students with disabilities for nine years. I wanted to explore current rehabilitation theories and teach for a while.

Paper Work

The first step was to approach our respective supervisors with our proposal for approval. We then had to go through our Human Resources Departments to write up our contracts. The Senior Executive at both institutions approved our plan. We arranged to swap jobs for the Fall semester.

Details

I assumed Mitch's teaching load in the Rehabilitation Program and because of my Social Work background, I taught interviewing and communications classes in the Social Work Program. Mitch assumed all my counselling duties, supervised SAIT's sign language interpreters and dealt with associated administration. I stayed on SAIT's payroll with associated benefits and Mitch did the same at MRC. We literally swapped seats.

Experience

We both felt that it was a rewarding and exhilarating experience. It provided me with an interesting professional development opportunity which enhanced my teaching skills, familiarized myself with rehabilitation theories, networked with peers at another institution and saw how another institution works. As I reflect on the benefits, I think the most significant outcome I received was to be in an instructor role for a semester. I was afforded the luxury of referring students to counselling. I learned first-hand how frustrating it can be to be diligently trying to turn in final marks with "incompletes" and deferred exams. I developed a new empathy for the demands of teaching—the marking, preparation, and constant need to be stimulating and exciting!

Suggestions

Mitch and I were in frequent contact and provided each other with support throughout the exchange. If you are considering an exchange, I think that mutual willingness to help each other is critical. We also spent time last summer trying to anticipate difficulties. Mitch helped me a lot by giving me all his materials and class notes. I introduced him to SAIT staff and students. Our colleagues' support of the exchange made it easier for both of us to settle in.

Judy can be reached at 284-7013 or e-mail at judy.murphy@sait.ab.ca if you have further questions. ⇨



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Why Ask Why?

- Why isn't "phonetic" spelled the way it sounds?
- Why do you need a driver's license to buy liquor when you can't drink and drive?
- Why are there interstate highways in Hawaii?

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Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)



by Mark Kolodziej

On the recommendation of a quality team, SAIT decided to pilot Prior Learning Assessment (PLA). PLA is the evaluation of an individual's formal education and work experience and translation into formal SAIT credits. The process that SAIT was going to use to determine these credits was the "portfolio." Upon investigating the portfolio approach, the SAIT PLA Committee determined that this approach was too labour- and time-intensive. Rather than throwing out the idea of giving credits based on experience, the committee was in agreement to create a new method for evaluating experience.

The method that was developed requires the following steps:

1. Evaluation of course outlines by instructors, coordinators, or people in industry to determine the importance of each objective to industry and to the program. These subject matter experts also determine the length of time for which the objective is valid.
2. Students give a subjective opinion of their knowledge of each course objective. They state how much experience they have, the last time they have used the objective and the competence they have with the objective.
3. The students' responses are electronically compared with the subject matter experts' criteria and an unofficial grade is given to the student for the knowledge.
4. If the grade is high enough, then the student is tested by the department. Most departments give an oral exam. Some departments give written or practical exams while other departments require the candidate to write the final exam in the course.
5. If the department validates

the student's grade, the grade then becomes official and appears on the student's transcripts.

The method has been validated by the PLA Committee, and the grade that a student obtains via the PLA process is usually within 5% of what the instructor would have given.

The SAIT method of giving PLA credits is effective, efficient and valid. This model has been accepted by several colleges across Canada. Colleges and universities in the United States are considering adopting the model. Some European countries are having SAIT staff visit their countries to set up this system.

Every year SAIT grants about 10,000 course credits. Most of these are transfer credits from other institutions, about 500 of these would be experiential credits. Every week there are between 10 and 50 phone calls enquiring about PLA. Of these, there are about five people per week who are "shopping" for credits: that is, they will attend the institution which will give them the most credits. SAIT is the leader in PLA in Alberta. Many students are attending SAIT because of this service.

In a study done at SAIT, it was found that students with PLA credits (transfer or experience credits) perform 5 to 10% better academically than their counterparts who

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SAIT Academic Faculty Association (SAFA) Scholarships

The SAIT Academic Faculty Association sponsors three scholarships.

Value: \$400

Number: 1

Conditions: For a student entering second or third year of an apprentice program at SAIT. Selection of the recipient is made on the following basis: minimum 75% academic achievement during the previous years of the program, preference to a dependent of SAFA members, financial need and other scholarships received.

Application: Deadline is July 15

Value: \$600

Number: 1

Conditions: For a full-time student entering second or third year of a two-year or longer program. Selection of the recipient is made on the following basis in order of importance: minimum GPA 2.5 during the previous year, preference to a dependent of a SAFA member, financial need, extra-curricular activities and other awards received.

Application: Deadline is July 15.

Value: \$1,000

Number: 1

Conditions: For students who will be enrolling in a full-time program at a recognized university, college, or technical institute. Awarded to applicants who

a) provide proof of acceptance in a post-secondary institution
b) are a direct dependent of a deceased SAFA member whose death occurred while employed at SAIT or during normal retirement immediately following employment at SAIT.

Interested applicants should apply directly to the President, SAFA. Only one award per family will be made.

Application: Deadline is July 15. ♦♦

SAFAGRAM

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SAFAGRAM editorial policy, as approved by the SAFA Executive on June 14th, 1995, is as follows:

1. The Editorial Board has the final say as to what is included or deleted from the newsletter.
2. Editorial Board decisions about newsletter material must be agreed to by consensus.
3. The newsletter will include a disclaimer stating that the views expressed in its content do not necessarily represent the views of the Editorial Board or SAFA.
4. All material included in the newsletter must
 - be signed by the author when submitted to the editors but anonymity may be requested and granted for printing.
 - be based on "reasoned argument" if personal criticism is used.
 - not involve name-calling.
 - not include sexist, racist, or homophobic comments.
 - be related to SAIT, although this will be interpreted broadly.

The views expressed in SAFAGRAM do not necessarily represent the views of the Editorial Board or SAFA.

FAQS

Frequently Asked Questions



by Heather Sagan,
SAFA Administrator

FAQ: Why do instructors pay SAFA dues and what do they receive in return?

A: The Technical Institutes Act of Alberta requires that the institute have a faculty association. Any employee of SAIT delivering instruction must be a member of the faculty association. The Technical Institutes Act requires members to remit association fees, and the fee structure is approved at the annual general meeting by the faculty members.

The Association provides assistance to address individual concerns, provide counselling and offer grievance resolution when necessary. The Negotiations Committee negotiates a collective agreement from which all faculty members benefit. Every instructor hired at SAIT must be hired according to the salary grid in the collective agreement.

All members receive newsletters and notices, may attend all general meetings and socials, may vote at elections and on contract ratifications, and may participate on committees. The faculty association financially supports the faculty professional development series held each year in May and June. As a member of ACIFA (Alberta College Institute Faculty Association), SAFA can offer low-cost professional development opportunities at the annual ACIFA conference. Discounts on home and auto insurance through Morgex Insurance are also available. All instructors benefit from the advice from and counsel of the ACIFA staff representative, the lobbying of the provincial government for improvements in post-secondary education, and distribution of information by the colleges and institutes to keep abreast of what is happening province-wide.

Through the participation of the SAFA Executive Committee and Faculty Council, SAFA is continually providing feedback to the Employer to make improvements for instructors in the workplace regarding health and safety, communication, professional development funding and staff lounges.

SAFA sponsors two scholarships for SAIT students—one for an apprenticeship student and one for a full-time student entering second or third year of a two-year or longer program. A third scholarship is available for a dependent of a deceased SAFA member enrolled in a full-time program at a university, college, or technical institute. Details of the scholarships are included in this issue of the SAFAGRAM.

FAQ: Is SAFA PD available this year?

SAFA PD is available for the 1997-98 academic year. The application deadline for SAFA PD is June 30, 1998. For details contact your department or the SAFA office at 8321/8378.

FAQ: Is the Computer Purchase Plan still available?

A: The Computer Purchase Plan is still available to faculty members. The Computer Purchase Plan is coordinated by Chin Yu, Materials Management, 8817. Details and application forms are also available from the SAFA office at 8321/8378. ↔

Teaching & Learning Centre



by Laura Cuthbertson
Coordinator, TLC

Happy New Year to SAIT faculty from the TLC!!

Approximately 120 people joined us in "bringing in the New Year" at our Open House on January 26, 1998. Ken Myhre announced new initiatives of the TLC for the upcoming year. These initiatives include the following:

Faculty Advancement Services: The TLC will be assuming responsibility for several services previously offered through the Human Resources Department. These will include administration of the U of A B.Ed. program, administration of faculty industry leaves and administration of faculty teaching exchanges. We will be working towards establishing a data bank for distribution of information regarding other educational degree programs. If you are interested in any of these programs, give us a call. New services offered will place an emphasis on faculty advancement through the scheduling of open classrooms for sharing of best practices and informal best practices round tables; as well, watch for threaded discussions on SAIT internet. We will also plan to implement a mentoring program for career advancement (watch for more information on this in future publications).

Adult Education Certificate: This initiative involves the implementation of a certification program in adult education for those instructors that have completed credit requirements. Details regarding credit structure will be finalized by June with implementation of the program in September. Credit will be available through courses offered through the TLC (e.g. ISW, Pre-service, CD 2000 training, etc.), prior learning assessment and transfer credit. Credit will be applicable to MIPS.

Teaching & Learning Award of Excellence: \$5000 will be awarded in the support of excellence in andragogical applications and classroom innovation. This award is intended to assist with costs of development activity.

We are currently planning for the PD Series which will be offered again this year through the months of May and June. Ted Lobley is coordinating this activity; if you have any suggestions regarding this year's series, please give Ted a call. Instructional Skills Work Shops continue to be offered and plans are underway for this year's Pre-service Training; give Laura a call if you are interested in either of these programs or drop by the centre. ↔

PERSPECTIVE



by Barry
Pratt

Happy New
Year to all,
and hey, we

survived the fall semester. Change for the better at SAIT reminds me of a saying we had when I lived in South Africa 40 years ago. The South African Railway is mentioned in the Bible "...and every creeping thing that creepeth or crawlth upon the face of the earth..." The South African Railway did indeed creep and crawl at a very slow pace like some things at SAIT; recently we had 21 instructors moved to full-time permanent positions. This should have been done last January to fulfill the terms of the 85:15 Letter of Understanding in our collective agreement. We still need more permanent positions to meet the agreed upon level for the spring semester. We have filed a policy grievance on this but hope to solve it cooperatively before the grievance is heard. We are pleased that the Employer has moved a number of AUPE staff, even some who have been here less than six months, from wages to salaried positions.

Your SAFA Executive has been busy. The Joint Advisory Council (JAC) has met several times in an effort to resolve the 85:15 issue. I meet monthly with Ken Myhre to discuss "state of the institute" at SAIT and am pleased that Ken is open with his comments and I feel he listens to mine. Your SAFA Executive met with Ken Myhre to discuss health and safety, staff lounges, SAFA PD, and the Computer Purchase Plan, Campus Centre fees and a review of SAFA office space. The SAFA representatives on the Workload Committee, Irene

Langille and Simon Bergen-Henengouwens, have been working diligently in an effort to develop a more equitable workload for instructors across campus. I meet frequently with faculty members on a variety of issues: providing advice, direction and guidance. I occasionally meet with Coordinators and Deans in an effort to resolve problems.

I would like to publicly thank the SAFA Executive, Faculty Council representatives, committee representatives, Heather Sagan and Kathy Burke for the commitment and hard work they put in to make SAFA, and ultimately SAIT, a better place to be. ♦♦



*Prior Learning Assessment
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did not receive any credits. These students are significantly more likely to complete their programs (graduate). Some departments are using these statistics to support using PLA credits as selection criteria.

Many businesses will not sponsor their employees if the institution does not offer PLA. With the popularity of the Internet and distance delivery, people are taking courses from many institutions and will likely choose to graduate from those

institutions which are willing to give credit where credit is due. It is predicted that up to 50% of SAIT students will be receiving some kind of credit for learning that has occurred prior to their coming to SAIT. Presently this number is about 25% and growing. It looks as if PLA is here to stay. If you have any comments, feedback or would like to have more information, please do not hesitate to contact Mark Kolodziej at 284-8640. ♦♦