EKKU’s New Minor in Applied Creative Thinking

With its new minor in Applied Creative Thinking, EKU is at the leading edge nationally in preparing graduates to participate in the Creative Campus Initiative that, according to The Chronicle of Higher Education, “threads through not only art and design, but also engineering, medicine and the arts and sciences.” The Chronicle article (Oct. 10, 2010) suggests that “creativity is not simply a product of personality or individual psychology, but is rooted in a set of teachable competencies.”

The Noel Studio offers four three-credit hour courses for the minor, two of which are required. For the remaining 12 hours, students can choose from courses in a variety of disciplines to ensure a depth and breadth of learning and acquire specific skills that are introduced and reinforced throughout the multiple disciplines.

Already, 20 EKU students with a variety of academic majors are enrolled in CRE 101, according to Dr. Rusty Carpenter, director of the Noel Studio, which has earned national recognition and hosted regional and national conferences. In May 2011, the Noel Studio was spotlighted in the cover story of University Business magazine. The five-page spread focused on effective and innovative group study spaces at several colleges and universities nationwide.

As of fall 2012, the Noel Studio offers three courses in ACT:

- CRE 101 Introduction to Creative Thinking
- CRE 300 Pedagogy of Creativity Studies
- CRE 400 Creative Projects
- CRE 490 Independent Studies

(CRE 101 and CRE 400 are required)

The additional twelve hours of the minor must be selected from extant courses and approved for the minor in order to ensure the breadth of student learning.

To learn more about EKU’s minor in Applied Creative Thinking, visit studio.eku.edu/minor-applied-creative-thinking.
Creativity in Research

Encouraging Creativity in the Science Lab
Linda Eyster (2010), from The Science Teacher, 77.

“Although science is a creative endeavor, many students think they are not encouraged — or even allowed — to be creative in the laboratory.” Eyster provides insightful suggestions towards encouraging students to be more creative in the lab.

Solve it!
Allowing students to problem solve using common procedural stumbling blocks that occur in experiments encourages them to try out their ideas.

“What is this for?”
Students often think tools in a laboratory hold a singular and specific function; this thinking inhibits their ability to be innovative. Allowing students to figure out how to manipulate instruments will ignite interesting and creative problem solving skills.

What’s my line?
Rather than asking students to follow directions in an experiment, encouraging the synthesis of each step will incite questions such as “why do we have to do this?” These questions are contagious for spreading original and creative thinking and should be encouraged.

The greatest misconception about science that inhibits creativity is: “If I follow step-by-step instructions, I will discover the correct procedure and use the correct equipment to get the correct answer.” Research will advance only if we have innovative people in the field.

Let’s Get Serious about Cultivating Creativity
Steven Tepper & George Kuh (2011) from Chronicle of Higher Education, 58.

“America cannot maintain a competitive position in the world order unless we better understand how to nurture creative talent.” Tepper and Kuh give education something to think about through their overview of creative skills:

1. The ability to approach problems in non-routine ways using analogy and metaphor
2. Conditional or abductive reasoning (posing “what if”)
3. Keen observation and the ability to see new and unexpected patterns
4. The ability to risk failure by taking initiative in the face of ambiguity
5. The ability to heed critical feedback to revise and improve an idea
6. A capacity to bring people, power, and resources together to implement novel ideas
7. The expressive agility required to draw on multiple means to communicate novel ideas.

Surprisingly, the percentage of graduates working in arts-related fields is up to 60% (compared to 50% biology, and 68% computer technology). However, only about 14% of working artists are satisfied with their income. Tepper and Kuh conclude by questioning whether the education system should start looking at arts graduates to better understand the challenges and opportunities of the creative economy.
Creativity Café

Four times a semester, the Noel Studio and the Teaching & Learning Center co-sponsor a discussion on creativity to which various faculty members are invited. Coffee and snacks are provided. The roots of this tradition are quite interesting as Erica McWilliam (The Creative Workforce, 2008) explains.

“During the 18th century, the coffee house emerged in Britain as an important ‘home away from home’ for the aspirational and the well-to-do alike. The café provided a convivial space, a place of sociability, learning and public display where social learning opportunities transcended class barriers.

“The space of the coffee house marked a borderland between spheres of production and of leisure, with daily visits being, for British men (customers were exclusively male), a vital means of establishing a social place in venture capitalism, colonial expansion and small-scale manufacturing. It was a place where men came to learn whatever they wanted to and in whatever way they chose - to share conversation, newspapers, coffee and gossip, to read and to be read to if they were illiterate.

“Cafés were spaces for opinion-making and opinion-sharing, operating as sites of scientific demonstration (Isaac Newton dissected a dolphin caught in the Thames in a coffee house) and as disseminators of advertising and employment opportunities, as well as warm and well-lit spaces inviting the individual to relax and linger as well as learn.

“Across the channel, Parisian cafés had become even livelier social hubs, exciting places for discussions of life, art, and politics, a home not just for critiques and the fashionable set, but also for emigres and intellectuals. Cafés continued to provide a space for the cultural and political boom of the 19th and early 20th centuries - the politics of Lenin, the art of the Impressionists, the philosophy of Sartre and the literature of Hemingway.”
Teaching Applied Creative Thinking

Charlie Sweet, Hal Blythe, Rusty Carpenter, and Shawn Apostel

Each age generates its own teaching-learning paradigm. The 18th century refined the Medieval Lecture/Sage on the Stage method, and the late 20th century gave rise to the Active Learning Method. Since then, educational and scientific research (especially in brain science) as well as technological advances have suggested the need for a 21st-century paradigm that addresses the new insights.

Additionally, certain skills in college students have become more vital. A 2010 IBM survey of over 1,000 CEOs revealed that the number-one skill sought from college graduates is creative thinking. Daniel Pink’s *A Whole New Mind* (2005) sees us moving into a Conceptual Age that values “high touch” and “high concept” skills – i.e., creativity.

*Teaching Applied Creative Thinking* (2012), a companion to their *Introduction To Applied Creative Thinking* (2012), proves a response to these educational and social realities. The authors propose a new paradigm, Mentor from the Middle, that places the instructor at the center of the teaching-learning experience with the following inter-related roles:

- Facilitator
- Coach
- Artist
- Critical Reflector
- Model
- Scholar

*Teaching Applied Creative Thinking* also offers suggestions for the optimal learning environment as well as case studies for utilizing the foundational nine creative thinking skills in class: shifting perception, piggybacking, brainstorming, glimmer-catching, collaborating, going with the flow, recognizing pattern, and using metaphor –
Upcoming Events

Spring 2013

Creativity Café:

Feb 1 – 10:30 to 11:30
March 21 – 10:30 – 11:30
April 5 – 10:30 to 11:30
May 3 – 10:30 to 11:30

Let us know if you would like an invitation to any of our events! Lynn.Philips@eku.edu

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