

# Journal of Research in Innovative Teaching

Volume 4, Issue 1 (March 2011)



*An Affiliate of the National University System*

# **Journal of Research in Innovative Teaching**



**Volume 4, Issue 1, March 2011**

**Publication of National University**

**La Jolla, CA USA**

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ISSN 1947-1017

When referring to this publication, please use the following: Name, (2011), title. *Journal of Research in Innovative Teaching*, 4(1), pp. (use the online version pages).

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## Editor's Column

This is the fourth issue of the **Journal of Research in Innovative Teaching (JRIT)**, published by National University. It demonstrates a steady progress in establishing a research culture at this institution. This issue includes 16 articles accepted after a rigorous double review. Among the authors you can find National university faculty, joint authorship of the University researchers with outside scholars, US researchers from outside the University and international writers.

National University's mission is to make lifelong learning opportunities accessible, challenging and relevant to diverse populations. In accordance with this mission, the National University research journal annual publication is an important benchmark in the University's maturity. Teaching, research and scholarship are interrelated; evidence shows that research enriches teaching and is capable of significantly improving student learning outcomes. JRIT is an annual multidisciplinary peer-reviewed publication of original research focused on new effective instructional approaches, methods and tools. It is intended to produce momentum to increase efficiency of learning and ensure better learning outcomes for our students.

The Journal is a forum to share faculty research and scholarship, which will ultimately benefit both the university academic community and our students. The Editorial Board is composed of top scholars and administrators from National University, as well as several internationally acclaimed scholars. The Review Board includes both internal and external reviewers.

All publications have been conditionally assigned in the following sections:

- Institutional Policies, Strategies and Leadership
- Graduate Education
- Teacher preparation
- Online Learning
- Engineering

In the **Institutional Policies, Strategies and Leadership** section we present five articles, by C. Kalani Beyer, from National University, *Assessing faculty excellence through the merit process*; Ashok Kulkarni and Valeri Pougatchev, from Jamaica University of Technology, *V-index as a Measure of the Targets/Objectives Accomplishment of the Strategic and Operation Plans for an Educational Institution Unit (Case Study)*; David E. Smith and Steven Fleisher, from National University, *Grade Inflation: The Implications: Faculty Integrity versus the Pressure to Succeed*; Ron Germaine, Dina Pacis, Terry Bustillos, Penny Keough, Diana Wheeler, Mary Anne Weegar, from National University, *Lessons Learned through a Review of Grade Appeals*; and C. Kalani Beyer, *Investigating the process for reappointment and promotion*.

The first article presented by C.Beyer from National University discusses the merit process for salary increases as a reward for exceptional performance in teaching, service, and scholarship used at many higher education institutions. The author argues that the merit process provides a perfect arena from which to determine the quality level of faculty since the conferring of merit connotes exceptional performances. This research demonstrates how the merit review process at a School of Education increases faculty excellence and offers suggestions on making the process stronger, leading to more faculty reaching a level of excellence.

In the second article A.Kulkarni and V.Pougatchev from Jamaica University of Technology claim that strategic and operational planning is a critical process in the success of an educational institution being a part of multilevel planning processes defined by the scope and duration. The authors propose to associate each unit and individual of the institution on its strategic planning level with a *V-index* – quantifiable, numeric indicator of a unit or individual’s objectives/targets accomplishment that demonstrates to the senior management of the institution the current position of these units/persons on its/their ways to achieving its/their strategic goals. For obtaining V-index in case of cross-planning (between different units or individuals) they implemented a well known method in area of Experimental Design - “Taguchi Method”.

D. Smith and S.Fleisher from National University review current and past practices of the grade inflation controversy and present ways to return to each institution’s established grading guidelines. They support this study using profiles from select universities: some have approached the grade-inflation controversy academically; others have been profiled in the news. The model provided intends to ensure that degree candidates are academic experts in their field, having earned a credential through rigorous study.

R. Germaine, D.Pacis, T.Bustillos, P.Keough, D.Wheeler, and M.Weegar, National University faculty, report the frequency, causes, and solutions for grade appeals at a university with a view to enhancing the overall quality of the teaching/learning experience. They present evidence that the incidence of grade appeals can be reduced through clear and precise descriptions of assignments and grading criteria.

In his second article, C. Kalani Beyer investigates the process for reappointment and promotion relying on primary research from the processes used in the School of Education of National University through the review of dossiers over a four-year period. This research considers the contents of dossiers submitted during this four-year period to better understand if any patterns can be discerned by which to improve the process for reappointment and promotion.

The second section **Graduate Education** includes articles by Marilyn Moore, B. Charles Tatum, and Ismail Sebetan, from National University, *Graduate Education: What Matters Most?* and Larry Froman, from Towson university, *An Interdisciplinary Graduate Course: Raising the Bar to Address Quality Student Learning and Professional Development*.

In the first article the authors argue that graduate education is guided by regional accreditation, professional organizations, institutions of higher learning, and educational research. They propose guidelines for developing graduate programs of excellent quality, depth, and mastery, and tools for developing excellent curricula, and methods to support superior faculty. They also provide a template for course syllabi that demands intellectual rigor, and a roadmap for achieving these necessary components of high-quality graduate education.

The second article prepared by L.Froman discusses the need to design innovative and relevant interdisciplinary graduate courses. The author considers the challenges of interdisciplinary graduate education and then addresses the content, design, and instructional approaches of a newly developed course entitled “Psychological Issues in the Workplace (PIW).” He provides examples on both conceptual and applied levels to illustrate how the course supports quality student learning and professional development within the context of Towson University’s Graduate Programs in Human Resource Development and Counseling Psychology.

The largest section of the journal, **Teacher Preparation**, integrates articles covering a wide range of pertinent issues. The first article by N.Klokar, N.Benderets, and A.Borbit, from Kyiv Regional In-Service Teacher Professional Development Institute, Ukraine, *Model of the Regional System of Distance In-service Teacher Training in Ukraine and its Implementation* presents an

innovative model of in-service professional development for Kyiv region school educators using a distance learning format. The authors offer their vision and experiences in providing effective, up-to-date professional development using online technologies.

Peter Serdyukov and Mary-Lynn Ferguson, from National University, in their article *Teacher Dispositions: What Kind of Candidates Do We Have in a Teacher Preparation Program, and How Can We Make Them Better?* argue that dispositions have become a part of teacher professional qualifications and that issues surrounding dispositions have become a growing concern for all parties involved in education. Therefore teacher educators have started discussing attributes related to candidate dispositions and ways to develop them consistently. The authors present a study identifying four different dispositional categories that included research on individual dispositions and candidates' perceptions while examining patterns of change in dispositions as the candidates move through their preparation program.

R.D. Nordgren, from National University, who offers an article entitled *21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills: A High School and University Collaboration*, writes that the phrase "21st Century Skills" is becoming increasingly common at the end of the first decade of this millennium in the general media and in scholarship. The author examines the implementation of an initiative involving three colleges within a university and nine public high schools addressing the teaching and learning of skills deemed necessary for success in the 21st century workforce.

Thomas Doyle and Clara Amador-Watson, from National University, in their *Study of the Predicting Power of a Screening Protocol for Successful Teacher Performance in a University Internship Program* discuss alternative teacher certification programs, also known as teacher internship programs, that have been designed to ensure candidates' expert subject matter content knowledge and develop pedagogical skills. The focus of the study is to determine National University's ability to predict the success of interns by comparing their scores in a pre-admission interview with University Supervisors' formal evaluations after the second and eighth month.

Donna L. Elder and Wayne Padover, from National University, in their article *Coaching as a Methodology to Build Professional Practice* examine the effect of implementing a peer coaching model in a private northeastern secondary school. The authors investigated the coaches and coachees' perspectives of the model's effectiveness in the first year of implementation. Both coaches and coachees felt that the experience helped improve teacher practice. This action research study demonstrates that peer coaching can be used in a school to provide support for improving teacher practice.

Nina Stankous, from National University, discusses *Math Teacher Preparation Using CSET: Problems and Solutions*. She states that in the light of mathematics teacher shortages and low student performance, the issue of mathematics teacher preparation becomes critical. The author addresses a few important issues focused on mathematics teacher preparation, specifically preparation for California schools. This study identifies problems related to mathematics teacher preparation and describes the main concerns of CSET Single Subject Math exam takers. It also offers an effective way to evaluate and address those concerns and provides a list of recommendations to improve the quality of future mathematics teachers.

Britt Tatman Ferguson, from National University, and Douglas Rakoczy, from Minnesota State University Moorhead, present their *First Attempts At Bibliotherapeutic Lessons: Special Education Teacher Reflections*. The focus of this inquiry was the initial use of bibliotherapeutic lessons by special education teachers. The authors discuss how four special education teachers reviewed, adapted, and implemented well-designed bibliotherapeutic lessons that use stories, over an extended period of time, to help students understand and resolve social and emotional

issues. The capability of incorporating bibliotherapeutic interventions into naturally occurring instruction and use of the regular curriculum may make such interventions easier to implement and less intrusive in the general education environment, thus facilitating inclusion of students with Individualized Education Plans.

The **Online Learning** section represented by Cynthia Schubert-Irastorza and Dee L. Fabry, from National University, contains an article called *Improving Student Satisfaction with Online Faculty Performance*. The purpose of this study was to determine the key factors influencing negative student evaluations of teaching scores in online classes. A total of 3,294 students who attended 282 online courses taught by 161 faculty members, responded to the current institutionally approved online-evaluation-of-teaching instrument. The study's long-range goal was to use the findings to help online instructors improve their pedagogy and, thus, their student evaluation scores. Study results suggested that negative student evaluations of faculty are most strongly influenced by lack of organization, lack of clarity, and insufficient feedback.

In the **Engineering** section Mohammad Amin, Ronald P. Uhlig, and Pradip Peter Dey, from National University, together with Muzibul Khan, from Nokia, present *The Impacts of Direct and Indirect Measures of MS Assessment in Wireless Communications Program*. They argue that researchers face many challenges to assess a program in a new field, especially when the program changes rapidly to keep pace with evolving and emerging technologies. The Master of Science in Wireless Communications (MSWC) at National University is one such example. This article investigates the roles of the Program Advisory Board, program annual reviews, and a five-year program review in the MSWC program and presents a summary of impacts on program changes. All major aspects of program and course-level changes are considered in this investigation.

The Editorial Board invites the readers to discuss the publications presented in this issue and to suggest topics that might be of interest for the academic community at National University and beyond. We will publish letters from readers in the next issue.

*Peter Serdyukov*  
*March 1, 2011*