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Reflection – conference

Adjunct Faculty Conference Reflection

I attended the Adjunct Faculty Conference, “Re:think Teaching and Learning,” at SLCC on Saturday, October 27. There were parts of the conference that were quite interesting, applicable, and valuable. Having served as a conference chair for the Utah Dance Educator Organization for two years, I appreciated how well-organized the conference was. Sessions were easy to find, the space was clean, neat, and well-organized, and there seemed to be enough people there to answer questions and direct participants. The meals were good, and, again, well-organized; the sessions were relevant and interesting.

I really appreciated Dave Bate’s session on “Active Learning Strategies;” he was teaching by modeling, rather than by lecture. It was helpful to see his ideas in practice, rather than in theory. He encouraged the use of gesture, sound and video, write things down, and sparse, unpredictable rewards. He also gave me a book for responding to a question correctly, which was really nice and unexpected.

In the “Service Learning 101” workshop, with Lisa M. Walz, we discussed ideas for service learning projects, and she introduced us to many resources we can access for help in creating community partnerships. This was useful because sometimes the hardest part about developing a project is knowing where to start. She was clearly an expert in her field and obviously willing to share ideas or make herself available, but her presentation was very traditional (lecture and powerpoint, with little participant interaction).

During lunch, as Provost Picard was talking, I was arranging my papers, writing some notes, etcetera, and another adjunct at my table said to me, “you aren’t paying attention.” I realized that this

was case-in-point of different intelligences or learning strategies. I responded by saying, “yes I am; he just talked about how sometimes it is a challenge for our students to decipher their gen. ed. requirements because they have so many choices, and he made an analogy to the movie, *The Hurt Locker*.” This other adjunct looked at me in shock: I actually *was* listening and knew what was going on. It made me really reflect on how I am a tactile, linguistic, and visual learner. It reminded me of one of my own students who was constantly doodling in class, but always knew exactly what was going on and could answer any question or contribute to any discussion at any time. It made me appreciate how we all learn in different ways and need to remember that – not only about our students, but also ourselves. *(I hope this other adjunct attended the session on Multiple Intelligences, to serve his own teaching!)*

The one part of the conference I was not too impressed with was the keynote address by Michael W Kwan. Although he is an honorable judge and respected fellow adjunct faculty, I found his speech somewhat inappropriate . . . even offensive. He showed videos of people getting shot, and told stories about trauma in the hospital and in his field. I struggled to find the relevance, or at least the mindfulness, in these choices with regard to the conference theme. I would expect a keynote presentation to inspire people and be uplifting, not show murder and destruction during breakfast. I also recognize that I am more sensitive to these things than most people, due to some of my own experiences, so I accept that my response was probably due as much to me as to him/his presentation.

Overall, the conference was valuable. I was reminded of many of the teaching strategies that were emphasized in masters’ program, was able to set concrete goals for my own teaching, and took away some new ideas to improve as an educator. I was also pleasantly surprised with Bate’s gift and by winning a gift card (because I had a green sticker in my program booklet). It seems so silly, but those little extrinsic rewards are nice when we sacrifice time with families or other commitments for our – albeit necessary – professional development conferences.