



**Michael Reder, Director**

**Eugene V. Gallagher, Founding Director & Faculty Fellow**

### **Johnson Teaching Seminar for Incoming Faculty**

Since 1998, Connecticut College's Johnson Seminar for Incoming Faculty has been supporting faculty in their roles as teachers, scholars, and community members. The Center sponsors monthly seminars that model and address particular aspects of effective teaching and learning. We also have a variety of informal meetings and discussions throughout the academic year, all aimed at supporting faculty and helping them become happy and successful members of the college community. Our distinctive "Peer Mentoring" approach, in which second- and third-year faculty organize and help run each seminar allows us to adapt easily to faculty needs, models effective strategies for new faculty, and provides a supportive cohort for newer faculty that crosses disciplinary and departmental boundaries. These cohorts of new faculty are forming bonds and transforming the teaching culture at the college. Teaching has become "community property" (Shulman)—something not only valued, but also shared and discussed. These connections have also led to interdisciplinary collaborations in research and teaching. Over 40% of our faculty has participated in one or more years (averages over 2) of the seminar.

### **Sample Topics for Johnson Seminar for Incoming Faculty**

#### *Fall Semester*

1. **August**—Questions and Answers; Teaching at CC (local cultures, rules); Syllabus Workshop; Ideas for 1st Day of Class; Best Practices
2. **September**—Passive to Active Classrooms (discussion, small groups, etc....)
3. **October**—Mid-semester Checkup and Evaluation (grading, student evaluations, mid-term evaluations, peer evaluations); Pressures on New Faculty
4. **November**—Using Writing as a Tool for Learning
5. **December**—Learning Styles

#### *Spring Semester*

1. **January**—A look at Objectives-Based Learning
2. **February**—Grading: Best Practices and Alternatives
3. **March**—Mid-semester checkup and discussion of teaching
4. **April**—Using Technology Effectively
5. **May**—Designing Your Course for Higher-Level Learning

*Other recent topics include:* Issues of Power and Teaching; Balancing Teaching, Research, and Service; Student Cultures and Expectations (with students as guests); General Education and its Impact of Teaching. We also offer a syllabi workshop at the beginning of second semester and a series of optional casual lunches—often off-campus—throughout the semester.

For more information about the Connecticut College Center for Teaching & Learning, contact Michael Reder at [reder@conncoll.edu](mailto:reder@conncoll.edu) or visit <http://CTL.conncoll.edu>.

For information about subscribing to the Small College Professional and Organizational Development listserv (SC-POD), visit: <http://chestnut.conncoll.edu/mailman/listinfo/sc-pod>.

## **Selected quotes from participants in the Johnson Teaching Seminar for Incoming Faculty:**

The Johnson Teaching Seminar has been the single most important factor in helping me make the transition from Teaching Assistant to Assistant Professor. The probing discussions on pedagogy, the input from my peers and collegial connections established during the seminar meetings have changed my teaching and definitely shaped my career. The most important thing about this seminar is how it positively affects the institution on several levels by helping new professors connect across disciplines to become resources for each other. I have learned a great deal about teaching strategies, about ways to structure assignments, and methods to productively respond to student writing. However, by far the most important thing I have gained is the reality that I am one of a community of scholars committed in a core way to becoming better teachers. That is invaluable.

--Assistant Professor, English

Participating in the Johnson Teaching seminar has been the highpoint of my first year at Connecticut College. Although I arrived on campus with 10 years of teaching experience, I have learned something from every session—both from the seminar leaders and also from the other new arrivals. The seminar leaders have done a wonderful job of establishing an environment in which everybody can talk honestly about their concerns, their failures, and their triumphs as teachers. And as a result, I feel like I've got a great supportive group behind me, so when I take chances in my classroom—and maybe fall flat—there are sympathetic colleagues on campus who applaud the attempt and who are ready to help me figure out how to do it better the next time. We've got the power to help our students become more actively involved in the learning process, and the Johnson seminar is the place that helped me realize that I could be a part of that.

--Associate Professor, Art History

The seminar is especially valuable for exposing us in the formative stages of our teaching (first or second job for most) to issues of pedagogy and teaching styles, when we're most able to incorporate ideas from the recent literature into our approaches. It also is important in forming a sense of community among new faculty, so that we're more easily able to consult one another about the progress of our courses, the techniques we've tried, and their results. It offers the forum for just such discussions.

--Assistant Professor, Music

The Johnson Teaching seminar has provided me with the opportunity to share my teaching successes and disasters with other faculty members, new and established. These interactions have enabled me to develop the confidence and support necessary to enjoy teaching at Conn. Sharing my experiences with other new faculty members has been the only social support that I have enjoyed outside my department. As much as the details of our scholarly endeavors differ, we share some common concerns (grading, class discussions, attendance, etc) that have made my interactions with other new faculty members extremely valuable. I have requested the opportunity to continue my participation in the seminar next year in hopes of providing next year's new faculty the same benefit that I have derived from these meetings.

--Assistant Professor, Psychology

The Johnson Teaching Seminar saved me during my first semester at the College: because my department chair was abroad, I learned most of what I needed to know about logistics and teaching during the seminar. Most helpful were discussions on syllabus design, writing assignments, grading, student evaluations, and teaching assessment. The Johnson Seminar has confirmed what I've felt about learning all along--that we learn as much or more from our peers than from any other source. Having the opportunity to work and meet regularly with my peers at Connecticut College has been an invaluable learning experience for me in prompting me to examine and improve my own teaching methods.

--Assistant Professor, Slavic Studies