Dr. Vicki Long, Assistant Professor of Nursing, Recipient USCA Excellence in Teaching Award

Where do you draw your inspiration from for teaching?
My inspiration for teaching has its roots in nursing. Like all registered nurses educated through a baccalaureate degree program, the need for life-long learning was ingrained in me from the beginning. It sounds a bit hokey, but it is true. Medical knowledge is constantly evolving, so we must educate nurses to stay current in their practice. In nursing education, one is thoroughly immersed in a course of study that is challenging academically and personally. You cannot emerge from the process unchanged. It is an undeniable fact that teaching has been a part of my personal and professional life as a natural extension of becoming a nurse.

How do you create a safe/comfortable classroom that encourages all of your students to participate in class?
First of all, one has to understand the intense environment of our classes in nursing. We traditionally have three hour course blocks for each class on one day of the week since we spend hours out in the clinical field. That is a L-O-N-G time for one subject. I get bored lecturing, just as students get bored listening. Yet, we have an immense amount of complicated material to cover. I start with myself and focus on feeling present and attentive to the group. We are all in the class together with a purpose, so approaching it as an opportunity and not a burden helps us all get in the right frame of mind. I try to be myself as much as possible, though I suppose we all do have a teaching persona that can be a comfortable cloak at times to keep the class on track. The class has to have a leader, and as students understand the structure, I believe a security level arises where I hope each student feels respected and valued to express themselves. All college students are in some phase of adult learning, though their maturation levels vary. I expect mutual respect as adults. I find value in the andragogy philosophy espoused by Malcolm Knowles in that I believe adult learners are self-directed, build on their experiences and have internal motivation. I expected a lot out of these students. Because I teach both traditional and non-traditional students within the same course, I strive to encourage self-growth on an individual basis even though we can have some fairly large class sizes. This takes meeting students on their own level, again individualizing material on several stages at once. I believe a challenge in classroom teaching is not in finding a middle ground but rather finding the road that each student can travel at his or her pace, to get as far down that path as possible. Sharing those journeys collectively helps others to see a different perspective than perhaps their own, and I believe this enriches the classroom experience.

What is your most fundamental value as a teacher?
Being authentic. You cannot fake this job.
Describe the best teacher you ever had and how that experience informs your own teaching.

I had a lot of fantastic teachers from elementary school through my doctoral program, so it is really hard to choose who the “best” was. I remember them all vividly, from Mrs. King (my first grade teacher who had a love of reading and a really cool puppet playhouse) to Dr. Penelope Gadam-Ross, my anatomy professor who taught us that a good cadaver could last for years if treated with the proper respect. But one incidence stands out that left an impression on me that I draw from time to time as an illustration of a teacher setting a student free to be herself. The teacher was my clinical instructor in pediatrics. Pediatrics was an emotional challenge for me. The clinical facility where I was assigned was Children’s Orthopedic Hospital in Seattle. It was a very large regional center, much like Children Hospital of Georgia associated with MCG, and the children were really critically ill. That was in the day of nursing caps, and I hated mine. I went to my instructor in a moment of frustration and said, “This hat is getting in my way. I feel like it is standing between me and my patients.” She asked what I was going to do about it, and when I replied that I was going to take it off, she quietly opened a drawer in the staff lounge where she was sitting and pointed at it. I put my cap in there, she closed the drawer, and I never wore that hat again. She never said a word about it to me again, either. For all I know, it is still in that drawer!

What is the one thing you hope students remember about you?
I’d like them to remember that I honestly cared about them as individuals.

Choose three words that best illustrate your approach to teaching and tell us why you made those selections.
Well, I have four words that come to mind, not three, and I have trouble eliminating any one of them. These words are “approachable, available, accountable and authentic.” I want to be open-minded and amenable to my students’ situations. I want to be there for them, respond to them quickly and clearly whenever possible. I am responsible for what I teach and how I teach. I am not afraid to say when I have been misinformed, and when I have been absolutely wrong, I own that mistake as much as I own the truths I try to impart. I strive to be trustworthy, dependable and absolutely honest to what I feel are the best parts of being a worthwhile human being. Being a teacher is as close to being myself on a regular basis, and it is the most natural, comfortable and rewarding activity of my life.

What are your biggest teaching challenges?
I think teaching in the clinical area is truly the biggest challenge I have. One can encounter an array of obstacles in the field, but it also creates an opportunity for resourcefulness and real world learning. Students in clinical settings are often anxious, and they are very vulnerable. A brilliant and witty student in a didactic setting can morph into an awkward, tongue-tied apprentice in the clinical arena. My approach to teaching in this setting is very similar to my classroom approach, but it necessitates including the ability to determine the student’s capacity to successfully complete the assignment in a safe and dignified way for all concerned. One cannot escape the fact that we can do real harm to patients as well as good! Sometimes it involves removing a student from a situation, again with dignity and respect for all concerned. It involves caring and compassion for the students as well as the assigned patients. My own experiences as a student emerge large in my mind when working with students in the clinical setting, and I believe this empathy is constructive and supportive for them. My goals clinically are for students to grow in their confidence and compassion while delivering safe, competent and personalized care. At the end of the day, we want to leave the clinical arena with all egos (not to mention bodies) intact! There is no end to what can go wrong—and right—in that setting.

What makes you unique as a teacher?
I don’t know that I am unique; at least I like to think that there are others who approach teaching as I do. That would best be described as just being oneself, being comfortable with who and what you are as a human being. It sounds corny, but if that is what sets me apart, I embrace it. I couldn’t do this every day if it wasn’t a comfortable fit.

What techniques would you use to keep students actively engaged in the learning process?
I use case studies, share personal experiences and employ group work to advance individual learning and the learning of a class as a whole. I’m very involved in improving our students’ writing ability, and I work in groups and individually with students on their writing projects in the School of Nursing. Having them see me actively work with others is a modeling experience. A lot of nursing education is role-modeling. I do the same thing with teaching. I’ll bring in outside speakers. I lean on our resources here at USCA for expertise other than my own. I am a huge fan of Corey Feraldi and Career Services. Our students want a meaningful career, but in reality that translates into getting jobs. Corey has a lot of credibility with students. He has helped me establish mock interview experiences, utilizing the help of Aiken Regional Medical Center, to bring a new level of reality to the job-seeking experience. That helps students see the connection with what they are doing in their education that translates into the rest of their lives. We don’t learn in a vacuum. It’s hard to succeed as a registered nurse if you can’t get a job!

What suggestion would you give to new faculty interested in teaching at USCA?
There are some fascinating, inspiring people teaching at this institution. I would encourage new faculty to get involved in activities that let them interact with as many of these folks as possible. Attending the CI workshops and teaching in whatever capacity I can with faculty engaged in that program has been invaluable and honestly fun—challenging, but fun. Take advantage of the opportunities through the CTE, Research Day, task forces – there are so many chances to work together and learn from each other.

Please tell us about your chosen discipline. How long have you worked in or taught it? What made you interested in the
area? What keeps you interested in the area?
I became interested in nursing while an undergraduate English major. I volunteered at a local Planned Parenthood in Washington State while I was going to college. I was very interested in Women’s Health and the lack of services in rural areas. I was inspired by the dedication of the nurses and doctors who travelled weekly to deliver their services to those who would otherwise have had very little care. Through my English Studies, I had an opportunity to go to London for a summer and then ended up in Ireland for another nine months. I met a lot of people while I was travelling that had careers in healthcare. At that point, I was on an academic trajectory and ready to get my Masters in English. However, I was attracted to the autonomy I saw in the lifestyles of those in healthcare. When I returned to the US, I applied for admission to the University of Washington’s School of Nursing. Both of my undergraduate degrees are from the UW. By the time I finished my BSN, my graduate school efforts were directed towards becoming a certified nurse-midwife. I worked for almost 30 years in public health and then in private practice as a CNM. I always had an academic affiliation while in private practice, most notably in the Washington, DC area, as adjunct faculty for such institutions as George Washington University, Catholic University and The Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences. What keeps me interested in the field is simply the human condition. There is an unspeakable joy in being whom and what we are. While I absolutely loved being a nurse midwife and felt the impact of the lives I encountered, I am empowered and humbled by the students I help to send out to care for others.

Supercharge Your Classroom with Teaching and Learning Materials from the Gregg-Graniteville Library
by Kari D. Weaver, Associate Professor of Library Science and Library Instruction Coordinator
Did you know that the Gregg-Graniteville Library has a large variety of materials to support your teaching and learning needs? A selection of materials to help you directly improve your practice, including recommended journals and ebooks, may be found on the Teaching and Learning Resources Research Guide http://researchguides.usca.edu/teachingandlearning. In addition to direct materials to help you become a better practitioner, many of the electronic materials can be seamlessly incorporated into your course management systems, including Blackboard and WordPress. Here are a few of our best recommendations:
Create persistent links to copies of journal articles in our databases. Due to copyright restrictions, DO NOT directly upload copies of articles to your Blackboard shell. Instructions may be found here: http://library.usca.edu/index.php/LibraryInfo/CreatingPersistentLinks
Take advantage of the multimedia content provided by the Gregg-Graniteville Library. Many of our databases, including those from publishers Gale and Alexander Street Press contain videos of interviews and speeches from individuals of note. Two favorite tools for multimedia resources are Biography in Context and Black Studies in Video.
Take advantage of the extensive collection of ebooks the Gregg-Graniteville Library has to offer, currently standing at over 300,000 titles. The vast majority of these titles are from the publishers EBSCO and Proquest, and both publishers allow unlimited simultaneous users. In fact, at some institutions, faculty are using library ebooks as text books for students. While this is just a small selection of resources to help supercharge your teaching, the Gregg-Graniteville Library still has more to offer. If you want additional ideas or have questions about available resources, simply use our Ask a Librarian (http://library.usca.edu/index.php/Main/Chat) feature to ask, and a librarian will be in touch shortly!

Contact information
Please feel free to contact any of the following CTE Advisory Committee members with workshop ideas or questions:

- Dr. Timothy Lintner, Director/Chair
- Dr. Andrew Dyer
- Prof. Karl Fornes
- Prof. Katy Mooney
- Prof. Mila Padgett
- Prof. Kari Weaver
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Coming Soon to The Office of Distance Learning Near You!
by Dr. Veronica Outlaw, Director of Distance Learning

Are you considering teaching an online course? Do you know where to start? The Office of Distance Learning (ODL) can assist you in critically thinking about the needs of your learners, effective course design, issues of access and copyright, and multimedia options. ODL can also assist you in effective course design to develop a robust and quality course that has proven to increase faculty workflow efficiency and increase student learning success by addressing issues with faculty presence, interactivity/engagement, and retention. Offering flexible and accessible learning formats to distance learners is laborious work up front, but once the course is built, it practically runs itself.

Currently, the ODL webpage (http://web.usca.edu/academic-affairs/special-centers-and-programs/distance-learning/online_course_development_resources.dot) includes links to various templates to build your syllabus, course schedule, modules and welcome letter. It also includes links to valuable resources on building learning outcomes and objectives correctly. In addition, it includes a link to Quality Matters to reference the rubric of standard essentials needed in building a quality online course.

The future of ODL will include offering ODL 101: Developing & Teaching an Online Course at USCA as a professional development opportunity for faculty. Pedagogical and technological workshops and virtual conferences will continue to be offered. An in-house quality assurance checklist will be available for reference. ODL is also working on a series of “How-To” videos and webinar offerings on various topics. Stay tuned!

ODL will focus on continuing to support the needs of distance instruction by facilitating professional development opportunities for faculty, ensuring quality assurance in online courses, and promoting faculty mentorship while implementing new forms of online instruction as pedagogical theories, innovative practices, and new technologies evolve.

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**Fall 2015**

**Center for Teaching Excellence Programming**

**Excellence in Teaching Award Faculty Presentation**
Professor Vicki Long  
Thursday, August 27th  
B&E 102, 3:00 – 4:00  
The Excellence in Teaching series, sponsored by the Center for Teaching Excellence and the New Faculty Orientation Committee, honors the previous year’s USC Aiken Excellence in Teaching Award recipient. Dr. Vicki Long, recipient of the 2015 award, will share her insights and experiences in how to create and sustain powerful and engaging learning opportunities in the classroom.

**The Flipped Classroom: Practice and Pitfalls**
Dr. Tom Smyth  
Tuesday, September 29th  
SAC Faculty/Staff Lunchroom, 12:30 – 1:45  
What is the flipped classroom and how can I implement it effectively with my students? Come to this workshop to explore concrete strategies to reach diverse learners and improve student learning as well as to develop an individual plan for flipping an upcoming course.

**Cheating, Plagiarism, and Faculty Recourse**
Drs. Brian Parr and Tim Lintner  
Wednesday, November 18th  
SAC Faculty/Staff Lunchroom, 1:15 – 2:30  
What can you do to ensure academic integrity in your classes? This workshop will examine current issues of cheating and plagiarism on campus, including strategies used by students. We will discuss how to prevent academic dishonesty, as well as how to confront cheating behavior. The University’s procedures to resolve academic dishonesty will also be reviewed.
Scaffolding and Renovations: Building and Improving Writing Assignments
Dr. Matt Miller
Monday, February 8th
SAC Faculty/Staff Lunchroom, 12:15 - 1:30
This workshop will explore various strategies for developing effective writing assignments. The writing assignment sheet as a genre will be examined, uncovering the most useful approaches to developing assignments that get the most from your students. A brief overview of foundational composition theory will be included to facilitate the discussion. Finally, best practices for teaching various kinds of writing will be outlined, from informal in-class writing to formal essays, all with an attention to workshopping in class.

Critical Inquiry: Looking Back, Moving Forward
Drs. Michelle Vieyra and Drew Geyer, Professor Kari Weaver
Tuesday, April 12th
SAC Faculty/Staff Lunchroom, 12:30 – 1:45
This session will examine and discuss the long-term assessment data from the Critical Inquiry course. What have our students learned? Where are we making progress? What are our current opportunities? This session will explore and examine the ways faculty are reinforcing concepts in their disciplinary curriculum and generate ideas for how this could be done by other faculty as well.

New Faculty Engagement
In collaboration with the Office of Academic Affairs, the New Faculty Orientation (NFO) Committee and the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE), the New Faculty Engagement initiative is designed to provide new faculty a series of professional development opportunities during their first year at USC Aiken. All first-year, full-time faculty are invited to participate. Sessions will be facilitated by members of the NFO and CTE, and will address topics such as balancing teaching and research, best practices in teaching, student support and others. NFE is a cohort-based program that begins with the New Faculty Orientation, followed by a series of workshops and gatherings throughout the academic year.

Panel Presentation (USC Aiken Students): My Expectations of College and College Teaching
Wednesday, September 30th
12:15 – 1:30, SAC Faculty Dining Room

How College Works Dinner and Discussion
Thursday, November 19th
5:30 – 7:00, Mi Rancho

Balancing Teaching and Research
Tuesday, February 9th
12:30 – 1:45, SAC Faculty Dining Room

Student Engagement at USC Aiken
Monday, April 11th
1:15 – 2:30, SAC Faculty Dining Room