



# An Invitation to Learn

By Instructional Design Specialist  
Emily Hixon, and Director of CETL  
Charlotte Reed, Ed.D.

It's no secret that people are more motivated and productive when they are comfortable in their environment. Certainly this applies to student learning as well. As we begin a new academic year, we wanted to provide you with some suggestions for welcoming students to IU Northwest, and to encourage everyone who is part of IU Northwest's academic community to think about their role in inviting students to learn.

The theory of invitational education emphasizes the importance of a supportive and caring environment, and provides a structure for thinking about welcoming students to the campus and offering them an invitation to learn. This perspective recognizes the importance of taking an "invitational stance" when interacting with students. Underlying this "stance" are five key qualities of respect, trust, care, optimism and intentionality.

**Respect:** "People are valuable, able, and responsible and should be treated accordingly." Recognize and respect the unique qualities and situations of each student, and expect interactions to result in positive outcomes.

**Trust:** "Education is a cooperative, collaborative activity." Demonstrate "trustworthy patterns of interaction" by being reliable, genuine, truthful, and competent.

**Care:** "The process is the product in the making." Remember that means and ends are integrally linked and that you will not arrive at inviting ends through disinviting means. It has been said that "students don't care what you know until they know you care."

**Optimism:** "People possess untapped potential in all areas of human endeavor." This is "not a naive belief that good things will happen automatically," but a reminder to maintain high expectations, especially in challenging situations. Students will live up to or down to your expectations.

**Intentionality:** "Human potential can best be realized by places, policies,

processes, and programs specifically designed to invite development and by people who are personally and professionally inviting with themselves and others." Every invitation or disinvitation has the ability to help or harm, so it is imperative that people understand the power of invitations and consciously choose when and how to send them.

Invitational education suggests that we move beyond mindless civility to genuine caring where we intentionally strive to demonstrate these qualities in interactions with all persons. And, if we are to create a truly inviting atmosphere for students and colleagues, we must attend to more than our interactions with people. We must endeavor to apply these concepts to all aspects of the academic environment including: places, policies, programs, processes and people. In invitational education, these are referred to as the "Five P's."

**People:** "It is people who create and maintain positive patterns of interpersonal behavior," and these interactions must create a sense of acceptance and belonging for students and all who are part of IU Northwest's academic community. People, regardless of their role, can be either a lethal or beneficial presence by what they choose to say or do.

**Places:** "Places are powerful, and they can influence the performance and satisfaction of all who inhabit the school." The physical environment is the most visible aspect of IUN and will certainly influence students' first impressions. It's the little things, like comfortable seating and adequate lighting that can make a big difference in making students feel welcome.

**Policies:** "When policies are perceived as fair, inclusive, democratic, and respectful, they will have a positive effect on people's attitudes." Be sure that the policies surrounding your job function fit into this category and are being applied consistently — nothing is more frustrating to a student than getting contradictory answers from different individuals or departments about the same issues and circumstances.

**Programs:** "Programs can be formal or informal, curricular or extracurricular," and it is important that all programs "encourage students to see



themselves as lifelong learners capable of understanding matters of importance." Students should gain the ability to think critically and creatively in a variety of settings and circumstances.

**Processes:** "The final P, processes, addresses the feel and flavor of the other four factors and orchestrates them in a democratic manner." It is the sum of how we get things done in our academic community, like getting admitted to a program, changing a grade, getting a parking ticket dismissed, applying for financial aid, being advised or getting a new club started.

As another semester starts, take a moment to consider how you personally can incorporate these ideas into your work at IU Northwest. Think about how you can ensure respect for individual uniqueness, encourage a cooperative spirit, create a sense of belonging, contribute to a pleasing habitat and maintain positive expectations. It's easy to see how a little extra effort could go a long way!

Faculty can also learn more about invitational education and how to incorporate it into their teaching at a CETL-sponsored workshop entitled "What is an Inviting Professor?" to be held on Thursday, Sept. 9 from 1-3 p.m. or Wednesday, Sept. 15 from 1-3 p.m. If you are interested in attending, please register at the CETL Web site.

*The quotations in this article were taken from Phi Delta Kappa Fastback No. 488 encapsulating the tenets of Invitational Education by William Watson Purkey and John M. Novak. Copies of this publication can be obtained from the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning.*

## Upcoming CETL Events

### ERIS Workshop

Wednesday, Aug. 25  
10:30 – 11 a.m. OR 2 – 2:30 p.m.

In this session, you will learn how you can utilize IU Northwest's Electronic Reserves Information System to make reserve class material available to students electronically. ERIS and the library staff make it quick and easy for you to post documents in a secured online environment so students don't have to make a trip to the library to copy reserve materials...and they take care of the copyright issues! This session will be facilitated by a member of the library staff.

### Introduction to Oncourse

Thursday, Aug. 26  
10 – 11 a.m. OR  
Wednesday, September 1  
2 – 3 p.m.

In this session, you will learn about the features of Oncourse, Indiana University's online course management system, and how you can use Oncourse to enhance your course and save time for yourself and your students. This session will be facilitated by Emily Hixon, CETL instructional design specialist.

*(Note: This session is intended for faculty members who are new to using Oncourse. If you are already using Oncourse and have specific questions or want to know about the advanced features of Oncourse, please contact CETL to schedule an individual consultation.)*

### What is an Inviting Professor?

Thursday, Sept. 9  
1 – 3 p.m. OR  
Wednesday, Sept. 15  
1 – 3 p.m.

In this interactive workshop, you will learn about the central tenets of invitational education, including how to teach from an inviting stance, know your level of functioning, and extend the theory to four areas of practice. You are cordially invited to attend this session facilitated by Charlotte Reed, Ed.D., CETL executive director and international trainer for the International Alliance for Invitational Education.

### Teleconference: Classroom Strategies for Adjunct Faculty

Thursday, Sept. 16  
1:30 – 3 p.m.

This live teleconference will provide teaching tips to assist part-time faculty in promoting student learning. The teleconference will also be available on-demand via the Internet for six days following the live broadcast – please contact CETL for access information. A tape of the session will also be available for check-out from CETL.

### Brown Bag: Addressing Diversity

Tuesday, Sept. 28  
12:30 – 2 p.m.

Bring your lunch and join your colleagues in an informal Brown Bag Discussion related to the topic of "Addressing Diversity." Director of Diversity & Equity Ken Coopwood, Ph.D., will assist in the facilitation of the session.

For more information, please visit:

<http://www.iun.edu/~cctl/services/workshops.shtml>

## Contact Us:

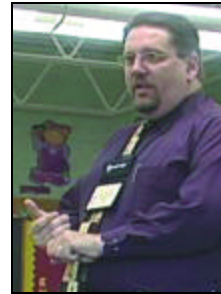


Center for Excellence in  
Teaching and Learning  
IU Northwest  
3400 Broadway  
Library, 332B  
Gary, IN 46408  
phone: (219) 980-6755  
fax: (219) 980-6762  
email: [cctl@iun.edu](mailto:cctl@iun.edu)

[www.iun.edu/~cctl](http://www.iun.edu/~cctl)

## Faculty Spotlight:

Jon Becker



After teaching high school for eight years, Jon Becker, an IU Northwest alumnus (B.S. and M.S. in Mathematics Education), rejoined IU Northwest's academic community as an adjunct faculty member in 1992. He is currently a Senior Lecturer and the Director of Developmental

Mathematics in the Department of Mathematics and Actuarial Science, and serves as the Liaison between the College of Arts and Sciences and regional high schools.

Becker's dedication to his students is evident in his approach to teaching. He states, "I find that students work and learn more effectively in an environment where they believe that the instructor genuinely values them and cares about their success." He learns each student's name early in the semester and makes himself available to students outside of class, recognizing that being an effective math instructor also requires him "to help the student develop as an individual."

While acknowledging that every student has the ability to learn, Becker also recognizes that students learn differently and that it is his "responsibility to find the method which best meets the needs of each individual." He understands that math is often a dreaded subject for students and works to create and maintain a non-intimidating learning environment where his enthusiasm and passion for his subject come through in his teaching.

Becker has received numerous awards and recognitions for his teaching including the Founder's Day Teaching Award (2001), the Trustee's Teaching Award (2002, 2004), and FACET (2002). He is active within the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, where he regularly attends and presents at workshops and is a member of the Steering Committee. He considers himself a lifelong learner and states, "I will continue to grow and learn so that I will be a better teacher tomorrow than I am today."

## Resource Spotlight:

### Successful Beginnings for College Teaching

This book addresses classroom management, first-day activities, creating a welcoming atmosphere, promoting student participation, dealing with incivility, and wrapping up the semester.

#### Tips from this book:

- Consider using an icebreaker activity during the first class meeting to get students comfortable in the classroom and with one another. Several icebreaker activities are described on pages 35-53.
- To help build rapport and connect with your students, "use your students' names in class in ways that will boost their self-esteem" (p. 66).
- Teach students to do well in your course by discussing appropriate study habits and other strategies that are necessary for success in your course. Although it may seem that you don't have time to address this issue in addition to class content, the payoff will be worth the time you invest (p. 15-16).
- Make your lectures more interactive by starting with an interesting story/anecdote, using plenty of examples, and building in opportunities for students to respond to questions or provide examples. Additional tips for creating an interactive lecture are found on pages 75-79.

For more tips, stop by CETL to borrow this book!

McGlynn, A. P. (2001). *Successful Beginnings for College Teaching*. Madison, Wis.: Atwood Publishing.