

CENTER FOR TEACHING NEWSLETTER

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Transforming Students

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Consider the light bulb as metaphor. A graphic shorthand for learning, the light bulb hovers above the head, an explosion of dashed lines arrayed around it to indicate not simply knowledge absorption, but inspiration, the sudden synthesis, the “Ah ha!” moment. If we assessed ah-ha moments using this symbol, the chemistry student who memorized the 102nd element in the periodic table would not get the gold-sticker light bulb. But the student who grasped the very organizational principles and predictive significance of this arrangement of elements—now that’s a light-bulb moment.

As teachers, we hope light bulbs often turn on in our students’ minds, and we do our best to help them throw the switch. Creating transformative learning experiences requires more than passing along facts and figures; good instructors also provide the critical thinking skills, intellectual challenges, freedom to fail, and time for reflection that enable students to actually think in profoundly different ways and to different ends.

Although light bulbs go on in an instant, transformative learning is a process. And while that process can be linear, more often it circles back on itself and or expands and contracts in multi-dimensional directions. The process transforms the assumptions through which students understand and interpret their experiences, including classroom experiences.



The Fall Lineup

Look for the list of events on our web site during the summer and on our poster, which will be mailed to the campus mailboxes of all TAs, faculty members, and other instructors by the Wednesday before classes begin.

We are now mailing posters in bulk to departments, which are responsible for distributing them to the mailboxes of all instructors. If you have a **departmental mailbox** and did not receive a copy of the spring 2008 poster in mid-January, please check with your departmental secretary, who can then contact us with an accurate number for the department.

If your mailbox is in a **non-departmental office** and you want a poster, please confirm with the Center for Teaching (cassandra-potter@uiowa.edu) that you are on our mailing list.

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Special points of interest:

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