Last semester, the CTL did a survey on which workshop topics most faculty would be interested in. A total of 239 faculty cast their votes on 30 topics, and we have picked three of the most popular ones to start us off this spring semester. We are fortunate to have found some of our most accomplished faculty members willing to facilitate these workshops. Please REGISTER at: http://homepages.neiu.edu/~ctl/workshops.html for any workshops you would like to attend.

Creating Interactive Classrooms
February 24, 2:00 – 3:00 pm, LIB. 310
Facilitator: Dr. Shelley Bannister (Justice Studies, Women’s and Gender Studies)
Audrey Reynolds Distinguished Teaching Award Winner, 2011

Many of us have heard Mortimer Adler’s tongue-in-cheek statement: “Lecturing is the transfer of information from the notes of the lecturer to the notes of the student without passing through the minds of either.” Shelley is not that kind of teacher. Her classes are interactive, engaging, humorous, and challenging. She involves students in large and small group discussions, debates, mock trials, and group vocabulary “quizzes”, generally attempting to create a classroom atmosphere that engages students. She expects students to participate and thereby shape their understanding of the material. She will surely expect the same from anybody attending her workshop on the 24th.

Learning Styles: Myth or Truth?
March 24, 2:00 – 3:00 pm, LIB 310
Facilitator: Dr. Denise Cloonan (World Languages and Cultures)
Audrey Reynolds Distinguished Teaching Award Winner, 2010

Many studies have been designed to prove the veracity of the existence of different learning styles. Are your students bored and not learning? Could it be true that we are responsible for driving away our students? According to Seymour and Hewitt (1997) the two reasons for “why undergraduates leave the sciences” are classroom climate and faculty pedagogy. The truth is that many students are multimodal when it comes to ways that they effectively process information. We will look at different learning styles and activities that are designed to engage those varying learning styles for all the disciplines.

Just Enough Cooks in the Kitchen: Designing and Managing Multiple-Section, Multiple-Instructor Courses.
April 16, 2:00 – 3:00 pm, LIB. 310
Facilitator: Dr. John Kasmer (Biology), and Colleagues
Department Chair

Many programs have high-demand courses that support the general education program and/or their majors, and offer multiple sections per semester that are taught by multiple instructors. While it is a challenge to design these courses in a way that allows for consistency across multiple sections, but still allows instructors academic freedom in teaching them, this tension can be addressed by taking a thoughtful and collaborative approach when designing (or re-designing) courses. This panel discussion will present the process used by the Department of Biology to redesign several of their courses with the goal of minimizing this tension, and will provide some examples of the kinds of issues that we had to deal with in making this process work.
Student Veterans in the Classroom
March: 11, 2:00 – 3:30 pm, LIB 310
Panel Members: Weston Polaski (Coordinator, NEIU Veterans' Services), Rene Talbot (President, NEIU Veterans' Club), Dr. Kim Sanborn (Dir., Nontraditional Degree Programs), Gregory Jackson (Instructor, Political Science), and Michael Martindale (Learning Support Center)
Facilitator: Dr. Edmund Hansen (CTL)

Student veterans at NEIU constitute almost 5% of the student population, and given the number of over 31,000 veterans attending college in Illinois alone, this segment of our student population is probably rising in the coming years. Transitioning from the highly structured environment in the military to a university campus can be a culture shock. This session’s mix of information and panel discussion is designed to provide faculty with the background needed to help student veterans in their classes with this transition and ultimately with becoming successful NEIU graduates. All faculty are invited, in particular those from departments with the highest number of veterans: Justice Studies, Computer Science, Biology, History, Social Work, Psychology, as well as from Education and Business. NEIU faculty and administrators having first-hand experience with veterans will be present to provide their perspectives and answers to your questions.

For those of us who have little direct experience with veterans, the following excerpt from a 2011 article in The Michigan Daily illustrates some key issues. The article is entitled:

“Sailor, Soldier, Airman, Marine and Wolverine: How veterans transition from war to campus life.”

In the winter of 2007, Eric Fretz, a lieutenant commander in the Navy Reserve and a Ph.D. candidate, was involuntarily recalled to serve a year-long tour in Iraq.

Fretz has made the transition from sailor to student several times: he alternated from active duty to reserves and obtained two bachelor's degrees, a master's and a Ph.D. along the way.

“It’s always a significant thing,” said Fretz, who received his first bachelor’s degree from the University and was a member of the NROTC. “Very quickly, you get pulled across that boundary. Either you can thrive in that environment, or you can’t.”

The real struggles for veterans begin when they step foot on campus. Fretz, who’s made the transition several times, called it “not hard, but challenging, because you’re changing worlds again.”

The mentality of the military in comparison to the world of academia is widely divergent.

“In the military, everything is precise and focused, and if you can’t give your answer quickly and cleanly, you don’t know what you’re doing, and you’ve got to be right,” Fretz said. “But in academia, a short answer is generally what an unintelligent person gives because they haven’t fully unpacked the concepts, they haven’t thought around the issue, they’re not capable of discussing nuance and broad themes.”

"You have to learn that culture,” he added.

Woodward said that for him, the transition was “pretty rough.”

“It’s just absolutely a different environment. You had more of an alpha-male aggressive, physically, mentally aggressive environment, and you’re going into more of a politically-correct arena,” Woodward said. “You have to be more collaborative. ... There’s not one person in charge anymore. Those aspects alone were pretty challenging for all of us.”

Some changes in behavior are simple, like cleaning up language in the classroom. “They don’t want to hear any of my profanity,” Fretz said. “My profanity is offensive to them, and I had become — as any sailor — extremely profane.”

For Fretz, changing worlds meant that he needed to change his way of thinking. He had to now think like a scholar instead of a soldier and make the mental adjustment from being in a position of authority as an officer to being a student under a different authority.