Welcome

It is with great pride that we share these articles of transformative learning experiences. The pedagogies presented in these articles of teaching and learning have revolutionized the classroom experience.

Students are learning actively, exploring a learning environment that extends beyond the bounds of the traditional classroom, and are creating primary source material in numerous disciplines. The coordination of these curricula with the INNOVATE instructional space and the CREATE learning space is an exciting new development.

Now, our students are using information to create new “knowledge” and they are using technology as a vehicle to implement their ideas. It is an exciting time to be a student and faculty member at JSU!

Dr. Robert Blaine, DMA
Dean of Undergraduate Studies
and Cyberlearning
QEP Director
I am absolutely thrilled to present this installment of the Jackson State University QEP Newsletter for the 2014-2015 academic year. The idea to focus on pedagogical approaches in this newsletter was born from my daily conversations with the instructors who teach University Success (UNIV 100) courses, the orientation course for all incoming first-year students. It was simply exciting to talk about what these instructors and students were doing in their UNIV 100 courses. It is the primary focus of instructors of this course to instruct students about how to be successful in their college careers by engaging them in organizational logistics, university history, time management, money management, global inquiry, active learning, study skills, critical thinking skills, interpersonal skills, research skills, cooperative learning skills, and technology skills. So, what follows in this edition of the newsletter is a series of short articles written by colleagues who share their own UNIV 100 success stories. These colleagues are all Global Inquiry Faculty Teaching Seminar (GIFTS) and/or Teaching with Technology (TWT) Program participants. Monica Flippin Wynn, Candis Pizzetta, and Cassandra Hawkins-Wilder have taught the QEP designated sections of the UNIV 100 course, Janelle Hannah-Jefferson teaches the traditional UNIV 100 course, and LaTonya Robinson-Kanou teaches the traditional online UNIV 100 course. These are success stories of innovation, engagement, and collaboration.

Dr. Preselfannie W. McDaniels, QEP Coordinator
The GEAR learning community is focused on two student-learning outcomes: 1. Students will be able to demonstrate competency in English and communication skills (writing, reading, speaking and listening skills). 2. Students will demonstrate critical multidisciplinary analytical and original thinking through core competencies of global inquiry.

This course establishes a standard of college-level rigor and brings foundational understanding of the analytical exercises by means of readings, discussions, debates, online activities, group research, lectures and presentations. Beginning in the fall of 2015, the learning outcomes of the traditional UNIV 100 and the QEP-enhanced UNIV 100 will merge to create the targeted GEAR course.
The classroom is no longer a place of static consciousness and one-way communication and instruction. Today on most college campuses including Jackson State, you can find Twitter and YouTube in the classroom, a newly flipped curricular environment, infused digital storytelling and non-evasive lecturing as the fresh modes of instruction. In fact, faculty are increasingly asked to incorporate the digital experience into their curriculum to reach out to the digital natives and make them feel at home, in that they seem to be most comfortable with utilizing more than one device at a time, using the Internet for almost everything and constant multitasking (Wang & Niiya, 2014). Yet, when we bring the digital experience into the classroom, faculty make certain students understand the utility of and utilization of these technological tools and to correlate these digital experiences with much needed face-to-face exchange of ideas.

I am a technology zealot in my classes. I want to incorporate new methods in which students communicate through the digital landscape, but I have been reminded by my University Success honors class this year that they not only need digital and technological resources in the classroom, but they also need and long for the face-to-face communication and interactive classroom activities. In the final unit of the course, students began reading Coming of Age in Mississippi, by Anne Moody.

Merging traditional classroom styles
This book provides an opportunity for students to experience the history of Mississippi and provides ways in which we can discuss race, diversity, and personal choices and perspectives. Surprisingly, it turned out to be one of the best units that I have taught in the QEP University Success courses. Once students knew that they were going to be quizzed on the material (don’t hate me for finding a way to get them to read; not everything changes), they found themselves really interested in the characters, the history, even the infinitesimal details. They needed to share and discuss the book in class; they wanted to think about the characters and correlate them to events happening today.

These discussions were critical in increasing their analytical and critical thinking skills in that they were required to defend and analyze their individual responses and those of their peers. We were able to use the Innovate classroom during some of our class sessions and we incorporated digital opportunities and

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interactive class activities, including creating digital word clouds to illustrate individual insight into the characters, or sharing favorite quotes and expressions on the all-inclusive Innovate white boards.

We know the digital tools are important, but the face-to-face exchanges and the sharing of ideas were equally as important and essential for the total comprehension and experience of reading this book.

Reflections
The events of this book and the goal of helping my students recognize their own voices to build and create their history were instrumental in the rationale for their final project. Students were assigned to groups and were asked to create a video representation of the last several weeks of their first semester as freshmen as Jackson State University.

Of course, there are the obligatory student experiences that should be recollected like Founders’ and Homecoming, but each group utilized digital representations to articulate their experiences and their individual points of view. Through a visual representation, we heard their voices.

Everything around us is changing and moving at warp speed and nowhere is this more apparent than in our learning communities. Teachers must find ways in which they can incorporate the digital experience and to correlate these digital experiences with much needed face-to-face exchange of ideas.

In the classroom
We must prepare our students to be digital citizens and professionals, yet (and this is crucial) there must be a balance of opportunities and options.

Our students, even now more than ever, need to be able to analyze, discuss, debate, argue and even know when to acquiesce. Our job is to figure out how to do it within our own disciplines with the available tools and technology.

Now of course, it doesn’t always work out as well as it did in my University Success class this year. But, I will keep on searching for options to add to my digital learning toolkit because

I want my students prepared to play in and be successful in the professional game of life.

Dr. Monica Flippin Wynn, GIFTS Original Cohort Faculty, has been teaching with the Jackson State QEP Enhancement Program since Fall 2010.
UNIV 100 courses enhance skills necessary for students’ successful matriculation. These skills range from time management to understanding the history of an institution. To ensure that student learning takes place, instructors must discover ways to enhance student engagement and ensure that students ultimately become accountable for their learning.

Creating an environment that is conducive for learning often requires the usage of technology in the classroom. While combing the flipped classroom method and technology, instructors successfully contribute to the synthesizing of information presented in a course. Learning within the classroom evolves and exposes students to purposeful and meaningful learning.

Critical thinking and problem solving skills are improved. Therefore, students are able to be internationally competitive in the 21st century.

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Subsequently, one particular unit taught in UNIV 100 focuses on the historical background of Jackson State University (JSU). To make the unit more applicable to students and ensure student engagement, students were provided an assignment that implemented digital storytelling. Digital storytelling involves using digital media to create a narrative. Following the research process, students sifted through materials about JSU. To assist students with finding materials on Jackson State, I created a resource via Storify and embedded it on the teaching website that I created for the class. Storify is a digital application (app) that collects resources available via the Internet on a chosen topic. Additionally, students used the iTunes U app to access a digital iBook, which I created specifically for the UNIV 100 course. Ultimately, students chose an aspect of Jackson State University that was of interest to them. For example, a basketball player on the JSU Women’s Basketball Team focused on the history of the basketball program.

Once students determined their area of interest, they compiled their research to create an interactive narrative using the application StoryKit. Designed to teach younger children to read, the StoryKit app allows the creation of a digital storybook that enables the creation of interactive books on the iPhone and iPad. The digital storybook allows students to input selfies, which are photos of oneself that are taken by the person featured in the image, recorded audio, narration, music, and video clips to reinforce the person’s point of view about a particular subject. With the StoryKit app, students can add text, record a file, use simple drawing, and record sound to tell a story. To create narration for their StoryKit books, students used iPrompt Pro virtual teleprompter software to ensure that they utilized the writing process. Students were challenged to present research in an interesting manner that appeals to their audience. Furthermore, the data demonstrated that students mastered desired learning outcomes. Interestingly enough, the digital storytelling assignment is linked to enhancing student engagement. As a result, students were chosen to explain their assignments and outcomes in a featured student symposium.

Cassandra Hawkins-Wilder, Instructor of English, Undergraduate Studies, teaches the traditional first year experience classes.
Jackson State University (JSU) has a strong tradition rooted in excellence. It is vitally important to teach the students attending our great institution of higher learning about our celebrated and resilient legacy. JSU’s First Year Experience Program’s flagship course, the traditional University Success, allows students to learn all its history through the custom portion of the textbook. This custom text designed and developed by University Success faculty encompasses a great deal of information targeted to get students acclimated to the JSU way.

**Tradition**

One piece of the fabric of JSU that we discuss in my University Success class is our school’s alma mater, “Jackson Fair.” “Jackson Fair,” written by Pawley-Hall, is a song that embodies the spirit and mind of the JSU family. Students are also required to attend campus convocations and assemblies. During Founders’ Week, students are required to attend the various activities that are geared toward introducing students to specific historical events and legacies that we hold dear. This week culminates with the Founders’ Day Convocation. This convocation most recently convenes on the plaza and consists of many customary acts that have been traditionally performed at this program during its 137-year history. There was a litany that students, faculty, and staff recited, as well as the bell ringing ceremony. Faculty also process in their academic regalia. All of these traditional and long-established rituals are explained in detail in the Convocation program booklet. In developing unique methods in which to present the information to students, the lead teachers for the University Success course strive to be innovative and engaging. Below are examples of the activities that the students are required to execute as requirements for the University Success course.

**Founders’ Day Convocation:**

Students are required to attend the convocation and bring their iPads. They are required to record a video journal of their experience at the convocation. They must record specific points that the guest speaker makes. Also, a mandatory reflection paper must be completed as a part of this assignment.

**Alma Mater Vocal Challenge:**

Students are required to learn the school Alma Mater, “Jackson Fair,” and the school fight song, “Cheer Boys.” Students are then given extra credit points if they stand before class and perform the song or songs for the class. This activity reinforces learning the lyrics for the students, and they tend to enjoy seeing their classmates sing.

**My JSU Commercial:**

Students are required to reflect on why they came to JSU. They are then expected to go out onto campus and find out something they did not know about our great university. Once this is done, students are placed into groups and are required to use their iPads and video equipment in CREATE to generate a “My JSU Commercial.”

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This commercial should reflect the perspective of every student in the group. These commercials usually range from 5-7 minutes (infomercial length). The students are encouraged to be creative and use graphics and music.

**Gibbs/Green Tragedy:** Students are required to read an article provided in the textbook about the tragedy that occurred on our campus in May 1970. Students are then expected to watch the May 15, 1970: Gibbs/Green Tragedy at Jackson State University YouTube video. After watching the video, students are then asked to reflect on what they read and viewed in the video. They are then compelled to think of one word that describes their feelings. At this point, they are then asked to find a song (regardless of genre or time) which corresponds to what they read, viewed, and felt. They then develop a short paragraph that describes their feelings and how the song relates. They must include specific lyrics of the song they chose to represent how they felt. The students must present this before the class.

**LESSONS LEARNED FROM EDUCATING DIGITAL NATIVES ONLINE**

**LATONYA ROBINSON-KANONU**

There is still great debate among educators about whether online courses provide students with the same or better quality instruction as face-to-face classes. This debate is quickly becoming null and void, because the digital natives have made it to college. Digital natives, coined by Prensky (2005), are technologically advanced multi-taskers who speak a digital language of computers, video games and the Internet. According to Prensky, digital natives are wired differently and require different instructional strategies. The emergence of online education by for-profit institutions and mass open online courses (MOOCs) has impacted digital natives as well as life-long learners.

Teaching an online University Success course for first-year students who are digital natives has been both a challenge and an opportunity to explore the infinite possibilities for engaging students. Each year has taught a new lesson and helped to change the culture of my class and enhance the expectations I have for student success. These are a few of the lessons learned.

**Lesson 1: Get Trained on How to Use the Learning Management System (LMS)**

Jackson State University’s Distance Education currently uses Blackboard as the LMS. There are over one hundred trainings per year (via face-to-face and webinar) to help professors stay up-to-date with the latest Blackboard features. Knowing how to use the Blackboard features facilitates appropriate course delivery.

**Lesson 2: Design a Course with Digital Natives in Mind**

The look and feel of a course can determine how well students can navigate through the course. Too much stimuli on the online course page is intimidating. Ease of access is what digital natives want. These multi-taskers are often watching TV, Tweeting on the phone and completing assignments at the same time.

**Lesson 3: Don’t Compromise Instruction because the Course is Online**

Teaching online has more perks than teaching face-to-face. Having the World Wide Web as your classroom setting opens the door for reimagining course content to help the students master learning outcomes.

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At the end of the University Success course, instructors want students to possess the skills and abilities to transfer knowledge, think critically, read analytically, and be able to contribute to their community and solve global issues. Students are introduced to these skills in UNIV 100 online through cooperative learning activities that facilitate discussion-based learning. Students become peer mentors and hold each other accountable. Students use the iPad, Skype, and Blackboard Collaborate to conference with each other and the instructor. Students have an opportunity to be authors, innovators, and entrepreneurs on the class wiki with video upload capability.

The lessons learned from teaching University Success online and the digital natives who enroll in the course have introduced this digital immigrant to new technologies. Similar to the flipped classroom, learning transcends traditional boundaries. A true exchange of intellectual discourse occurs between students and instructor. Assessment of student learning is instantaneous. Students are able to use feedback from peers to foster development. There are welcomed lessons learned, and I know that there are many more lessons to come.

The focus of the UNIV 100 course that I taught in the fall of 2012 was research, and I worked to help the students understand that research is not just a process we undertake for a research paper assigned in class. Rather, research is the process of gathering information, assessing the sources of that information, and using that information to draw and communicate conclusions. Nearly every time we make a decision, we are basing that decision on research.

The course was organized around five instructional units that required students to conduct inquiry into a variety of increasingly complex and progressively more academic topics. Each of the units required students to work collaboratively to gather and then evaluate the information that they had amassed.

The first three units included group projects based on the information that the groups gathered and evaluated. Since the students in UNIV 100 were all first-time freshmen who had been issued iPads, the initial research project was an iPad digital application (app) review. Groups were assigned two iPad time-management/scheduling apps to research and review.

The students were required to develop a list of criteria for assessing the apps’ effectiveness by examining other app reviews to understand which criteria were most useful to the reader. Once completed, the reviews were collected and distributed to other UNIV 100 classes. Knowing that their reviews were to be viewed by other students, the students approached the app review project with a heightened sense of responsibility for providing accurate and useful evaluations.

The second group project involved creating a Tumblr Blog on money management. The students developed blogs on the following topics: understanding student loans; finding inexpensive date-night options; building a good credit score while in college; managing checking accounts, credit cards, and ATM charges; finding free or reduced price entertainment on or near campus; and reducing the cost of food through coupons and careful money management.

Transitioning from group to individual work, students worked together to research First Year Experience programs across the country and to summarize the best elements of those programs.

By collaborating on the research component of the project, students were able to increase the breadth of their knowledge about First Year Experience programs, preparing them to write much more thoughtful and comprehensive recommendations.
Based on their research, each individual student prepared a series of recommendations for best practices in First Year Experience programs.

The final project was an independent research paper based on the Global Inquiry topics in the eBook designed for UNIV 100.

Students selected their topics and discussed their research with other students who had chosen the same topic area, allowing them to have the support of a group of fellow student-scholars. By sharing research ideas and reviewing each other’s drafts, students were able to experience the process that more advanced academic writers enjoy—peer review.

Connecting academic research to real life can be challenging, especially in first and second-year courses, but by emphasizing the skills necessary for successful research and encouraging students to collaborate, UNIV 100 can allow students to experience the thrill of knowledge creation even in a first-year class.

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jsums.edu: Image of students walking on campus
Jackson State University: Student Move-in photo
Preselfannie McDaniels: Johnson Hall
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Classroom Photos Fall 2014 Honors University Success Class
The Marching Bands Network: JSU Band Photo
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