



Connect Collaborate Innovate

A Newsletter From The Provost's Office



Dr. Martin McClinton,
Vice Provost, Academic Affairs

The Art of Engagement

I am not much of an email reader. I once told one of the faculty in my department that I get bored if the first two lines are not interesting; the emails certainly got shorter and more concise after that comment. I can't say that I am much of a writer either. I recall that my family demanded to see the letter that I received with my "O-Level" grades* when I told them that I got an "A" in English – they, nor I, could believe it,

but I wasn't going to ask the Examination Board if there was a mistake. The poor email reader moniker really is a defense mechanism: too many emails everyday can be overwhelming as I know that you are aware of too. And why am I telling you this? On Friday I was reading more than two lines of Dr. DeLuca's email – not to be a sycophant, but they have been interesting – when I came across this

statement: Dr. McClinton, Vice Provost, Academic Affairs will author the first issue of "Connect, Collaborate, Innovate" next week. Oi, what to write about and how to follow the perfect** prose of the Boss? I could have gone back to my Chemistry Journal Default - factual, third-person, impersonal statements, but then everyone would learn to use my two-line email rule.

* O-Levels were taken at the end of the English fifth year (which translates to US 10th grade); for Harry Potter fans, think OWLs.

** OK this might be sycophantic, but essentially true when you compare to my scratching

The task set by the Provost was to “give voice to an example from the week that exemplifies how we are achieving the College’s mission and strategic directions”. The Vision, Values, Mission and Strategic Direction are stated in the [College Catalog](#).

In this week’s message, I decide to tackle giving voice two of the strategic directions: the easy one being to ‘Innovate online and distance education’; the perhaps more thought-provoking one being ‘Advance a world-class educational experience’.

Library Services in the Time of COVID-19

Up until March, library and tutoring were not exactly centers of learning that encouraged social distancing. There had been some dabbling in distance education activities when staff couldn’t cover all of the College locations all the time, but the challenges of the Spring semester spurred innovation. The Librarians researched the Ask a [Librarian page](#) too, played with its settings and started working with FSW students online within days of the closure of the physical building. They continued to explore distance learning options and students can contact our librarians via Live Chat,



Students can access a variety of library services online.

email and text: they just have to go to the [library home page](#) and - depending on device - scroll as needed to see the links. If you need a librarian to ‘visit’ your class, you can arrange for a Librarian to virtually attend class by providing the information detailed on the request [research instruction page](#) and clicking on the appropriate librarian. An online form is being

planned: it may already be in place as you read this.

Some may be wondering how they could incorporate a library research experience into their classroom. While it did take many years to get me to switch from a written exam to a research project – students can’t understand chemistry journals until their 4 year classes, I used to think -

the support of the library faculty to help my students (and me) locate appropriate resources. The research project lead to much better learning outcome as well as further developing presentation skills. I didn't give up on written exams, just replaced one of four with a research poster or presentation.

The Tutoring Center and virtual learning

The tutoring center were similarly challenged in March and similarly developed new strategies. This semester students can use QLess to request virtual tutoring, can 'drop off' writing assignment for review as well as accessing Tutor.com for help. The staff spent time over the summer creating a series of video, now available on their own [YouTube channel](#) you should take a quick peek at the offerings – you might want to add a link for your students



Students in the peer mentor program on Charlotte campus work through math problems during a summer afternoon session circa 2016.

in the course canvas shell. As you can see (and to pivot back to the title of this letter), connections and collaborations are being forged innovatively. Since I have described how you and your students can access these resources, I think that I may have succeeded in the task

given. However, I also wanted to give you a challenge too.

The Art of COVID-19

I must admit that I might be a philistine when it comes to modern art. I have been to the MOMA in New York and stared at a 5-foot square black canvas and wondered why. So, when I joined FSW five years ago, Bob Rauschenberg wasn't a name on the tip of my tongue, not even close. However, wandering through the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery at FSW in new shows has been enlightening (Guerrilla Girls might be my favorite so far). The latest show, Olivier Mosset & Mike Bidlo, particularly appeals to me (and reminds me of that black square). Olivier Mosset created new artwork for the show: multiple white canvases, but these



Olivier Mosset & Mike Bidlo Exhibition at the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery at FSW

canvases are not identical and this, to me, is a way to explain the difference between the classic critical thinking exercise of compare and contrast. When I first was being taught about proper ways to write course learning outcomes, I was told to use one

verb and one verb only: compare AND contrast just wasn't allowed. Emm, what to do? Well, the answer was that you compare dissimilar things and contrast similar ones. Aha! Mosset's images should be contrasted. Perhaps you could have your students visit the

Gallery (it is open, times noted at their web page) and contemplate whether to compare or contrast? It would be an exercise in looking for details. Meanwhile, the Bidlo works are also white, but they were created by erasing art the previously drawn artwork. In my early days of teaching, I was told by a former colleague that education is what is left after the student has forgotten everything they

were taught. I am not sure that I totally believe that, but so much information is lost (or buried waiting to be retrieved) that it is the overarching skills that are taught that are more important – how to think, how to find and sort information, how to present, etc. So back to the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery (while I get off my soap box): few students have access to such thought-provoking

exhibitions. It is just one example of how FSW can advance a world-class educational experiences. Jade mentioned that there is even a virtual tour available if the Thomas Edison campus is too far for your students to go.

If you got this far, thank you. I hope that you have a wonderful semester and you will share your successes with me.



Dr. Martin McClinton hails from the United Kingdom and was the Dean of the School of Pure and Applied Science at Florida SouthWestern State College from 2015 to 2019. His recent promotion to Vice Provost occurred in Fall of 2019. He really enjoys Gary Larson cartoons.

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