

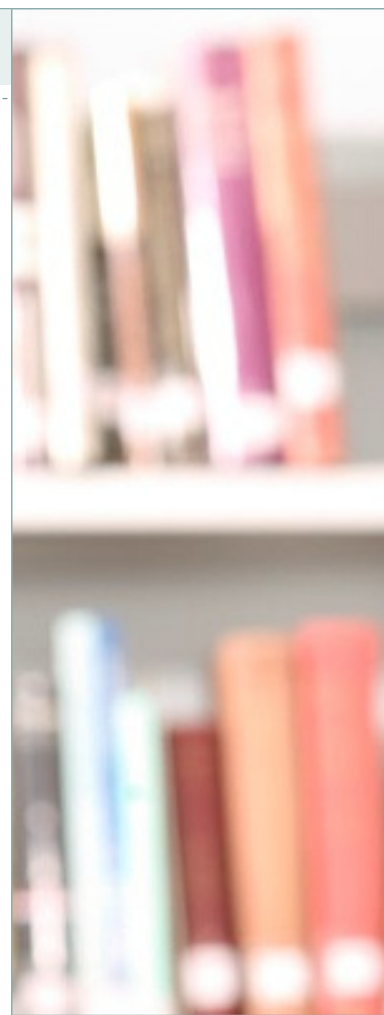
A DAY WITH RICHARD LIGHT

On January 16, Harvard's Richard Light, author of *Making the Most Out of College*, visited UALR to discuss his research on college effectiveness. Approximately 250 of the UALR community attended Light's sessions. At these sessions, Light focused on integrating *value added* components into academics in order to cultivate student persistence and growth.

Light emphasized listening to students, what they say and how they say it. While he did not dismiss the value of an online or in class survey, he emphasized holding two to two-and-a-half hour interviews with students to learn about their college experience. Light discussed Harvard's practice of interviewing students at the end of their first year by faculty and extensively trained graduate students. Students were flattered by the extensive one-on-one time and shared their perceptions honestly and openly.

Harvard also assesses students near the end of their fourth year. Harvard again assesses the "whole student" emphasizing value-added questions—not surveys. In this assessment, students were asked to give, with explanation, their list of the top five people who did the most for the world in the twentieth century. Then the students were asked to list, again with explanation, their top five people who did the worst for the world. Students' answers were telling. They demonstrated knowledge of history, foreign affairs, and politics. This question proved beneficial for Harvard because they saw students most often put political figures on their list to the detriment of scientists, artists and humanitarian figures. These findings were surprising, and Harvard is making changes to emphasize other areas of human experience besides politics.

While at Harvard, Light found that students value feedback more than just about anything else. Writing ten smaller, two to three page papers, rather than a large twenty-five page paper, seemed to provide an opportunity for students to learn from early feedback in time to make changes before all is lost (in terms of grades) after mid-term. *(continued on pg 2)*

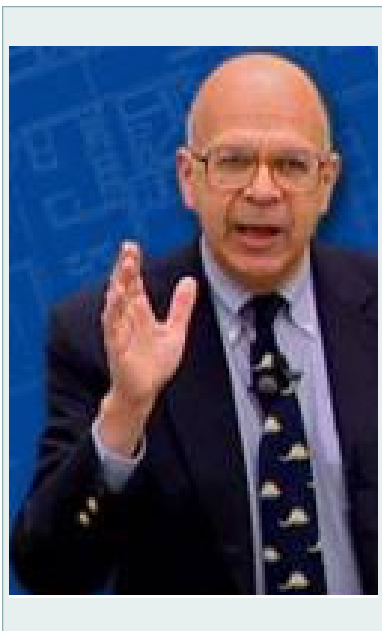


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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- February 21st
Table Top Hot Topics
- March 4th
Teaching Demonstrations
- March 12th
Teaching Demonstrations



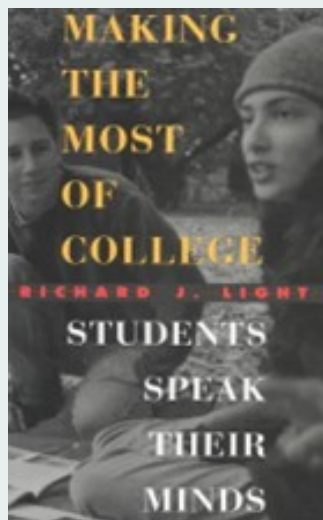
A DAY WITH RICHARD LIGHT (continued from pg 1)

Light also discussed doing things in the real world through problem-solving theme classes (i.e. writing to members of Congress to propose policy initiatives). He also advocated theory courses that connect to practice in a circular transformation so students see how theory and practice interrelate.

Light advocated the power of First Year Experience (FYE) courses to set the stage for establishing a successful college career. Light discussed developing FYE courses that are taught by faculty and are based on an academic theme. According to Light, the FYE course he taught was based on the theme, the value of higher education. His FYE course taught note taking, reading, and test-taking by investigating the value of higher education.

In addition to FYE courses, Harvard has a nine-day orientation for

While Light covered many ideas and topics in his day on campus, everything he said could be summed up in three words, community, community, community!



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its students that covers many areas of interest including test taking. In 2007, students were asked to answer an essay question from an American History course, "If Abraham Lincoln were alive today, would he be a Democrat or a Republican?" There were no right or wrong answers; faculty looked for how students used evidence to back up their claims. After writing the essay, students were asked to grade a previously submitted essay answering the same question. Finally, the students received another copy of the essay they just graded, graded by faculty with all of the notes and comments on the side. When the students left, they knew more of what to expect in their Harvard experience.

In addition to informing students of Harvard's academic expectations, Harvard encouraged faculty to form a community with their FYE students. FYE faculty were encouraged to become more personal with students by inviting them to dinner at faculty homes. This began a solid comradeship between students and each other, and students and faculty.

One of the most important ideas Light shared was the formation of cohorts and study groups for students within all classes. Students tended to persist if they were connected. Study groups and in-class group work helped students get to know each other and established a sense of community. While Light covered many ideas and topics in his day on campus, everything he said could be summed up in three words, commu-

GETTING TO KNOW DR. RICHARD LIGHT

Richard Light is a Walter H. Gale Professor of Education at the Kennedy School of Government and Graduate School of Education at Harvard University. He teaches statistics, program evaluation, and policy analysis with an emphasis on data collection and analyzes to improve program management. Light received his Ph.D. in statistics from Harvard in 1969, and was appointed a professor in 1974. While Light has authored or co-authored seven books, his most recent book, *Making the Most of College: Students Speak Their Minds* was honored with the Virginia and Warren Stone Prize for best book of the year about education and society.

Making the Most of College: Students Speak Their Minds adds a practical view of some concrete things instructors can do to enhance student persistence. It builds upon Harvard President, Derek Bok's book *Our Underachieving Colleges* which provides philosophy and background to the educational issues many colleges face today.

Before writing *Making the Most of College: Students Speak Their Minds*, Dr. Light was invited by four Harvard presidents, Derek Bok, Neil Rudenstine, Lawrence Summers, and Drew Faust, to create and chair the Seminar on Assessment. The Seminar on Assessment is a consortium that brings together faculty and senior administrators from twenty-four diverse colleges and universities to carry out research on college effectiveness. It is now in its eighteenth year.

In addition, Light is the founder and chair of the Forum for Excellence and Innovation in Higher Education. This forum is a five year effort to work with leaders of fourteen outstanding colleges and universities. The goal is to develop a capacity at each institution to become a "learning organization." Achieving this goal involves developing several innovations to enhance students' experiences at each college, to implement them on each campus, and then to evaluate rigorously their effectiveness.

Outside of Harvard, Professor Light has been president of the American Evaluation Association, an organization of scholars, scientists, and managers working to improve public services sector.

Light also chaired the Panel on Programs for Youth for the National Academy of Sciences in Washington, and he served on the National Advisory Board for the Program Evaluation Division of the U.S. General Accounting Office.

Recently, Dr. Light completed chairing "The Educational Impact of Changing Student Demographics in Colleges and Universities" at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. This five year study brought together senior campus leaders from twenty colleges and universities to explore how to enhance student's college experience as they attend college with peers from increasingly different backgrounds.

In 1998, Light was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sci-

UALR FACULTY & STUDENTS SPEAK-UP ABOUT DR. LIGHT'S VISIT

- Light really made me think. What can I do better to encourage collaboration in the classroom?
- Loved the idea of a personal interview at the end of one's college education, not those tiresome online things or those bubble sheets. Students are overwhelmed and tired of that. Let's be personal for a change.
- Great idea to use the deceptively simple questions—who has done the most to help the world in the 20th century—to assess more than what the student learned in a department; it's about assessing what has happened to the whole person. It's the "value-added" aspect of a college education that is important.
- Great ideas about a First Year Experience Course! Teach it through a theme and then let the concepts like test taking, note taking, time management and so on flow from that. It sets up a student's academic experience that way.
- He was so genuine; it really made a difference. I listened.
- I wish our orientation had included some of the things Light discussed—like evaluating a real question on a real exam. It would have prepared me for what was to come. *(continued on page 4)*

**UALR FACULTY & STUDENTS SPEAK-UP
ABOUT DR. LIGHT'S VISIT** *(continued
from pg. 3)*

- Orientation has to be more than a series of talking heads! That's what I got.
- A theme running through Light's comments was being more personal with students, making connections with them by inviting them to dinner, meeting them in the student center and so on. I didn't think that a school like Harvard would focus on the personal aspects of getting students to make contact with the professor.
- Great comments about the value of study groups. I hadn't thought about that.
- I liked what he said about changing the conversation about students away from retention. Instead of asking, "how can we retain you?" He asks, "how can we help you?"
- Light talked about how teaching is making investments in real people. This is an orientation away from the customer service model to a model focused on helping.

ences, and in 1999, he was elected a Trustee of Wellesley College. In 2000, he became a member of the National Board on Testing and Assessment for the National Academy of Sciences, and in 2001, he was elected to the National Academy of Education. In 2006, he began serving as a Member of the Board of Overseers Visiting Committee of the Harvard Business School, and in 2007, he was elected to the Board of The Teagle Foundation, which sponsors innovations in higher education.

He has been elected to the National Board of the American Association for Higher Education, and appointed to the National Board of the Fund for Improvement of Postsecondary Education. Recently, Dr. Light was honored with the Paul Lazarsfeld Award for distinguished contributions to science and to scientific practice, and named by Vanderbilt University's Chancellor's Lecture Series as one of America's great teachers.



Dr. Richard Light speaking at UALR

UNIVERSAL DESIGN: AN ALTERNATIVE TO SEPARATE BUT EQUAL

Universal design is a concept that has emerged from the architectural field and is now being applied in all types of environments, particularly the learning environment in higher education. The term universal design was defined by the team of architects, environmental researchers, engineers and product designers, who are credited with its origin. They define universal design as the design of products and environments that are usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. This same team of professionals developed a set of seven principles which guide designers to maximize usability and accessibility.

One of the pioneers to apply the universal design concept in educational

Universal design is “the preparation of curriculum, materials and environments so that they may be used appropriately and with ease by a wide variety of people.”

settings was Frank Bowe (1947 - 2007). In his book, *Universal Design in Education*, universal design is defined as “the preparation of curriculum, materials and environments so that they may be used appropriately and with ease by a wide variety of people.” Many educators have embraced the concept of universal design because its application enhances instruction for all students. It changes the emphasis from “special features for a few” to “good design for many.”

Many of us recognize that architectural features designed to benefit people with disabilities are advantageous to everyone. Lowered water fountains, for example, allow children to get a drink without assistance. Ramps are more convenient when we are pulling luggage or moving equipment. The same phenomenon has occurred with newer technology. Cell phones equipped to send digital messages provide accessibility for people who are deaf, but are also convenient if you are in a meeting or in a noisy environment. These are examples of the principles of universal design in action.

Adopting universal design as a framework within which to deliver instruction and organize academic programs will result in new and improved techniques for the instruction and inclusion of all students.

When a course is designed with universal design principles in mind, it meets the following criteria

- The components of the course are clearly defined (*continued on pg 6*)

Principles of Universal Design

- **Equitable Use** - The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.
- **Flexibility in Use** - The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.
- **Simple & Intuitive Use** - The design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.
- **Perceptible Information** - The design effectively communicates the

necessary information to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.

- **High Tolerance for Error** - The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of unintended actions.
- **Low Physical Effort** - The design can be used efficiently and comfortably with a minimum of fatigue.
- **Appropriate Size & Space** - Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of user's body size, posture, or mobility.

Source: North Carolina State University, Center for Universal Design

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **February 21st**
Table Top Hot Topics
- **March 4th**
Teaching Demonstrations
- **March 12th**
Teaching Demonstrations
- **March 20th**
Teaching Demonstrations
- **April 16th**
Teaching Fellows luncheon &
ATLE Annual Report

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UNIVERSAL DESIGN: AN ALTERNATIVE TO SEPARATE BUT EQUAL

(continued from pg 5)

- The knowledge, skills and prerequisite courses are identified
- The expectations are communicated clearly
- The physical environment is accessible and conducive to learning
- The class atmosphere encourages and supports interaction
- The instructional methods address student diversity
- The technology is used to enhance instruction and increases accessibility
- The mechanisms for demonstrating knowledge are available in a variety of ways
- The feedback is clear, prompt and frequent
- The professor encourages good study habits

(Adapted from the "Principles for Applying Universal Instructional Design" developed by the Curriculum Transformation and Disability, University of Minnesota, Funded by the U.S. Department of Education. Project #P333A990015.)

For ideas on how to apply the principles of Universal Design, go to <http://www.ualr.edu/pace/index.php/ud-tips> or contact the Disability Resource Center at 501.569.3143 (v/tty).

Look for an article in the next issue, which will include information about what is being done to make usable, equitable, sustainable and inclusive learning environments at UALR.