

# Mediated Learning

*A Newsletter by and for the Instructors of The University of Montana*



## Center for Learning and Teaching in the West

*Libby Krussel*  
*Mathematical Sciences*



Professor Libby Krussel

The Center for Learning and Teaching in the West (CLTW) is a National Science Foundation-funded Center for Learning and Teaching, one of ten such Centers in the nation. CLTW is a consortium of five universities—Colorado State University, Montana State University, Portland State University, The University of Montana, and the University of Northern Colorado—in partnership with Ft. Belknap College in Montana, other community and tribal colleges, the Portland Public Schools, and rural and reservation schools in Montana and Colorado.

The goal of this multi-state and multi-institutional consortium is to increase the number of qualified mathematics and science teachers in the middle and high schools, as well as mathematics and science education faculty for colleges and universities; provide professional development and support to mathematics and science teachers in low-income and high minority schools in both inner cities and rural schools in the West; investigate how technology can improve graduate education programs; and better prepare leaders in science and mathematics education.

To this end, the Center is establishing a multi-university program that adds value to existing doctoral and post-doctoral science, mathematics, and science/mathematics education programs at the five university campuses. The Center has a multi-disciplinary group of Fellows, cohorts of pre-doctoral and post-doctoral students who participate in

research and field work and participate in the Center's core curriculum and on-site internships designed to complement and enhance their discipline-based education and research. At UM this academic year, CLTW-UM is supporting seven doctoral Fellows, Kereen Monteyne in Chemistry, Renae Seegmiller in C&I, Emily Geraghty and Matt Zunker in Geology, Amanda Whittemore-Olsen in Forestry, and Debbie Sloan and Mary Boognl in Mathematics.

The Center also supports Faculty Fellows who conduct research, team teach new courses, and/or work with colleagues on the reform of upper division science and mathematics courses required of pre-service teachers. CLTW-UM is particularly interested in providing support for mathematics and science content faculty interested in participating in Center educational research in math and science issues that fit with the Center's research focus. Last year the Center supported Prof. Tom Dick, of Oregon State University, who visited the mathematical sciences department, developed and taught an on-line, doctoral course "Models of Technology Use in Mathematics and Science," and contributed to the research program of the Center. This year, the Center is supporting Professor David Erickson, C&I, to develop and teach a doctoral level on-line course "Models of Professional Development in Mathematics and Science."

As part of its professional development focus, the Center is developing integrated graduate

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Professor Sharon Barrett

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*“Barrett believes the journalism school produces successful students because faculty employ a hands-on approach; students learn by doing.”*

*Katherine Sather  
Sophomore, Journalism*

Visitors to Professor Sharon Barrett’s office in the journalism school get a taste of the Latin culture. Paintings from Peru hang on her walls and colorful dolls from Mexico sit on her shelves. Both are souvenirs of a career that has crossed cultures as well as professions.

Barrett is bilingual, fluent in English and Spanish, and works as both a professor and professional journalist. These accomplishments have helped her earn two Fulbright awards, the latest last spring, when she traveled to the University of ORT in Montevideo, Uruguay for a month-long fellowship. During her stay, she gave a lecture on press coverage in the war in Iraq and schooled journalism students on the skills such as developing news sources—something especially important in a nation like Uruguay. “Countries like Uruguay don’t have open document and meeting laws,” Barrett said. “For a journalist to get information, they have to rely on their ability to cultivate sources.”

Barrett began her career studying journalism and literature at Indiana University. Her family insisted she earn a teaching license and she discovered she enjoyed the field. After graduation she began teaching at an experimental high school in Chicago. “I really liked teaching once I did it,” she said. She completed graduate studies in English at the University of Wisconsin, where she met her husband, UM economics professor Dick Barrett. The couple moved to Missoula in 1970 when he took a job with The University of Montana. His wife began work at the Missoulian, where she worked until joining the staff at the School of Journalism in 1981.

Her husband sparked her involvement in the Latin culture. Dick spent time in South America while in the Peace Corps and in Latin America completing graduate work. He was awarded a Fulbright to travel to Mexico in 1981 and took his wife with him. “I didn’t speak a word (of Spanish) at that point,” she said. “I had a year to cram in the beginning level classes.” She and her husband were taken

by the culture, and returned many times. Their daughter was born in Mexico.

Meanwhile, Barrett began teaching reporting classes at UM. She spent summers at the foreign desk at the *Washington Post* and began writing book reviews for the *Chicago Sun Times*. In 1987 she and her husband were again struck by wanderlust, she said. “My husband said “it’s your turn to apply (for a Fulbright).” Barrett was awarded a Fulbright lectureship to teach at the University of Lima in Peru. She traveled across the country giving seminars to students and professional journalists. “Peru was coming out of a long dictatorship in which the press had been shut down,” she said. “The year we were there the press was flourishing.” Since then, her career has included many trips across the border to teach journalism.

Back at UM, she’s settled into teaching opinion writing and magazine writing in addition to basic reporting and editing classes. Barrett believes the journalism school produces successful students because faculty employ a hands-on approach; students learn by doing. In her magazine writing course, Barrett’s students pitch story ideas to magazines with the possibility of some of being published. She tries to work with each student on an individual basis. “Some people you have to handhold and lead along, but others you have to beat with a stick to get them where they’re going,” she said.

Senior journalism major Alisha Wyman has taken three classes from Barrett, most recently magazine writing. Wyman said Barrett’s classes are often challenging. “She may be strict,” Wyman said. “But what she says is always valuable criticism.” Barrett is able to give firsthand advice to students.

In addition to book reviews, she often submits articles to magazines. She enjoys horseback riding and she recently wrote an article for

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## Barrett

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*Practical Horseman*. She said it's important for teachers stay active in their fields. "It's important in any profession that people, when teaching, have to keep going back to the well and replenishing," she said. Besides, she's happy doing it. "A lot of colleagues my age talk about retiring and people always ask when I'm going to retire," she said. "I don't have any real interest now. I like what I'm doing."

## CLTW

(Continued from page 1)

courses for in-service science and mathematics teachers in all three participating states, designed to improve teachers' content knowledge in their discipline while improving their understanding of standards-based instruction and new assessment strategies.

The Center is also developing a program to address the needs of pre-service teachers, by focusing on the alignment of upper division courses with the standards and by providing more peer teaching and early field experiences to recruit more students into the teaching profession. At CLTW-UM, Professor Georgia Cobbs, C&I, is modifying the existing field experience for pre-service teachers to provide an intensive field experience during the intersession for mathematics and science teachers by placing them in reservation schools in Arlee and St. Ignatius.

All Center programs include an emphasis on research to ensure that all participants learn to value the importance of research and evaluation in all educational programs. All Fellows are encouraged to participate in cross-disciplinary research teams that are investigating the four basic research themes within the Center: (1) Which teaching/learning approaches best improve student learning? (2) What types of assessments adequately measure student learning? (3) What can be done to increase the numbers of underrepresented students in science and math? (4) How can distance education be used to improve student learning and teacher knowledge?

It is envisioned that the Center will increase both the number of qualified mathematics and

science teachers and the number of qualified individuals in positions of educational leadership. Additionally, the Center will result in a stronger educational infrastructure in the West, with improved undergraduate and graduate-level coursework and a better understanding of the role technology can play in the delivery of these courses to benefit all teachers and students, particularly those in inner cities and in reservation and/or rural schools. Ultimately, the Center's emphasis on research and assessment will result in improved teaching and learning for all students in the West as well as at schools and universities around the country as the results of the Center are disseminated nationwide.

The research focus of the Center is designed to: (1) help us understand and promote student learning and achievement in mathematics and science within high-needs populations, (2) advance our understanding of teaching/learning, including distance-education strategies, and (3) impact three key channels of influence—Curriculum, Teacher Development, Assessment and Accountability - and Contextual Forces (as defined and amplified in National Research Council's *Investigating the Influence of Standards: A Framework for Research in Mathematics, Science, and Technology Education*, 2001).

For more information about the Center, or to apply for a faculty, post-doctoral or doctoral fellowship, please contact Professor Libby Krussel at CLTW-UM, in the Department of Mathematical Sciences, [krussel@mso.umt.edu](mailto:krussel@mso.umt.edu), (406-243-4818) or Sheila Bradley, [sheila.bradley@mso.umt.edu](mailto:sheila.bradley@mso.umt.edu) (406-243-2659).

### Brown Bag Lunch

Co-sponsored by the Technology and Learning Collaborative and the Center for Teaching Excellence

#### "Technology in the Classroom: Enhancing the Dialogue"

Tuesday, October 7, 2003, noon to 2:00 p.m. in the North Underground Lecture Hall.

Steve Gilbert is Director of Technology Projects of the American Association of Higher Education. His focus includes the development of activities and projects to improve and extend academic programs through "Collaborative Change."

Open to all faculty and graduate students.  
Please RSVP to CIS, x5455.

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The Center for Teaching Excellence at The University of Montana was established in July, 1999 when it received approval from the Board of Regents. The Center is administered out of Academic Affairs.

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The University of  
**Montana**