

Response has been good Profes learn to teach

by Geoff McMaster

Professors at the U of A finally have the chance to improve their teaching.

A program of workshops and seminars on improving university teaching, including such topics as Enhancing Lecturing Skills, Improving Class Discussion, and What Makes Students Learn - a look at Motivation, is taking place through February and March.

The workshops, which can last from one half to two days, are conducted by experts on teaching methods, some of whom have conducted workshops all over the world. The seminars are short, two hour affairs given by professors from the U of A's Faculty of Education.

Dr. Gary Kelly, chairman of the Committee for the Improvement of Teaching and Learning, and organizer of the seminars, says this is the first year such a program has been implemented.

The response so far has been

good. 350-400 faculty applied, twice as many as there were places for.

"The most committed," says Kelly, "seem to be professors from the professional faculties because they have certification boards on their backs demanding certain minimum standards."

Response from the Faculty of Arts has been poor.

Nevertheless, Kelly says "there are an awful lot of faculty members who are very open minded about teaching, and who are ready to devote as much energy to it as to research."

He also denied the popular belief that professors can only excel in one of the two areas.

"People who are good scholars are usually good teachers too; somebody who is a lazy slob is a lazy slob at everything."

"The cost of a program like this is peanuts," says Kelly.

"It costs only one third what is needed to send an associate professor on study leave. Next

year though, I'd like to double that."

Voluntary, mutual consultation is the main concept behind this project, Kelly says.

"Professors are given the opportunity to discuss teaching issues and to meet colleagues from other faculties that they would not have met otherwise, and most find that the basic problems are the same for everybody," he says.

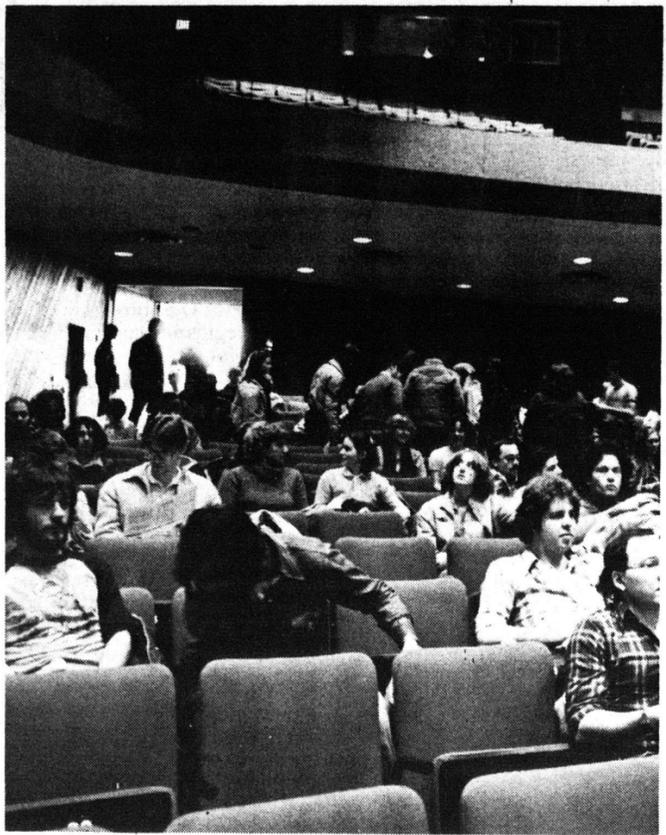
The program is aimed towards a number of goals, says Kelly. "I would like to see academics learn to help their colleagues, becoming semi-professionals in teaching techniques. There should be a system in every department whereby a few professors perhaps drop one course to act as part time teaching consultants."

He added that it may also be possible in the future to send professors away to special teaching courses outside the province. "Given the cost, I think this would be a great investment."

Special seminars for teaching assistants, involving simulation classroom situations, are also being considered, he says. "Some T.A.s have never been in front of a class before and they need to get used to it."

Administration has not shown much interest in the program. Of the 65 administrators invited to an introductory wine and cheese party, only two, president Myer Horowitz and a representative of the dean of arts showed up. Kelly says he would "like to see the deans get on the bandwagon too."

The program will run for three years as a research project until sufficient response to the idea has been demonstrated. The committee will then ask General Faculties Council for permanent funding.



Next to Nexus, everything in SUB Theatre has made money this year. That's good news down the hall in 259.

Theatre making it

After a disastrous deficit last year, SUB Theatre is continuing to break even this year.

This weekend a variety of shows drew large crowds. The husband and wife jazz team of Toshiko Akiyoshi and Lew Tabackin drew 800 for two shows in the 700-seat theatre. And the Royal Canadian Air Farce and George Thorogood and the Destroyers shows were sellouts.

Theatre manager Peter Feldman says "The whole year has

been very good; we've made money on everything except Nexus in September."

He estimates that when all interdepartmental costs are subtracted, SUB Theatre will break even on the year as a whole, or even make a little money. This contrasts with last year's deficit of \$50,000.

Says Feldman, "Suffice it to say there's been a dramatic turnaround."

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