

Members teach classes of 100 or more

Century Club tackles lecture class problems

By Lori Sullivan

Large lecture classes can pose large problems, and the UNL Century Club is working to solve them.

The Century Club is a year-old volunteer organization of 30 faculty members who teach lecture classes of 100 or more students. Members trade ideas and teaching techniques, working together to overcome large class problems.

Ted Pardy, associate professor of life sciences, teaches a physiology class of 360 students.

Potential problems in large classes are student alienation, feelings of anonymity and a sense that the instructor is inaccessible, Pardy said.

One solution for the problems is to create the "atmosphere of a small classroom," Pardy said.

The key is to get away from being a small figure locked into the front of the classroom, he said. One method is to use a microphone that permits movement. This allows an instructor to go all over the classroom, establishing important eye contact with students.

Slides and other visuals make good use of the space in large classrooms, Pardy said.

"If you have a 14-foot screen, use it to get a really nice big illustration up for everyone to see," he said.

Another means of "shrinking" a large classroom is using in-class question groups, Pardy said. He said he finds when students work together on problems, they participate just as they would in a small class.

"Students should also be encouraged to ask ques-

tions during a lecture," Pardy said. "And response is important. You should positively reinforce the student by saying something like 'I'm glad you asked that,' then give a complete answer."

The mass behavior of students in a large class can be hard to control, Pardy said. He referred to what he calls the "graffiti gradient" as a measure of the difficulty

Pardy knows when his students are getting bored. ... When chairs begin to squeak and feet start to shuffle, he will ask his students why they are bored.

-from Associate Professor Ted Pardy, member of the UNL Century Club

in keeping contact with students in the back of a room. Pardy said as a rule, the front four rows of desks will be relatively mark-free. However, he said, as you move toward the back, graffiti on desks increases steadily.

An instructor can not control only by "force of presence," but needs to use a variety of methods to keep contact with the class, Pardy said. The hardest thing about teaching a large class is presenting the mater-

ial you need to, while monitoring the feeling in the classroom, he said.

"You need to realize what is going on and have a series of responses ready to deal with it," he said.

Pardy said he knows when his students are getting bored. His first indication is the noise level.

When chairs begin to squeak and feet start to shuffle, Pardy said at times he will ask his student why they are bored. Often he finds out they have understood the point he is making and are ready to move on to another topic, he said. By communicating with his students, Pardy said, his lectures become more productive.

Common ways instructors lose the attention of a class are "using a winding-up tone," and "oversummarizing," he said. Valuable time is lost that could be used for covering new material, he said.

"You have to be enthusiastic, present good material, and stay on top of the class," Pardy said.

Some introductory classes can be taught well in large lectures, he said. Although they have their problems, large classes achieve "economies of scale" which allow the purchase of expensive media equipment which could not be justified for a small class.

Pardy has established a "hot line" telephone answering service for his students. At any time, callers can leave a question or problem on the recording. Pardy listens to the tape, calls students and works with them to solve their problems. Pardy said he also uses some of the hot line questions in class to clear up any remaining problems.

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Events focus on wellness

Wellness Week will conclude Wednesday with 10 programs and a keynote address all aimed at giving people more knowledge on the spiritual and mental aspects of wellness, Deb Fischer, University Health Center radiologist, said.

Sister Mary Christelle Macaluso will deliver the keynote speech, "The Joy of Loving Yourself," at 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the Centennial Room in the Nebraska Union.

The other programs, locations and times are:
9 a.m. - Career and Personality Assessment, East Union.

10 a.m. - Study-Time Management, east union.

10 a.m. - The Spiritual Dimension of Wellness, Nebraska Union.

11 a.m. - Film Festival, union main lounge.

1:30 p.m. - Getting to Know Me: Journal Writing, union.

2 p.m. - Career and Personality Assessment, union.

2:30 p.m. - But I Was a Straight A Student in High School, union.

3:30 p.m. - You + Me = A Relationship, union.

Police Report

The following calls and complaints were received by UNL police from 7 a.m. Sunday to 7 a.m. Monday.

9:27 a.m. - Vandalism to a sign reported at Regents Hall, 3835 Holdrege St.

4:04 p.m. - Theft of netting surrounding tennis court at Harper-Schramm-Smith reported.

4:18 p.m. - Purse theft reported at Love Library.

7:34 p.m. - A fire safety poster reported set on fire at Abel Hall; no damage listed.

8:42 p.m. - Bicycle reported stolen from 22nd and S streets.

11:08 p.m. - Nuisance phone calls reported at Sandoz Hall.

1:57 a.m. - Fire alarm set off at the Horse Barn on East Campus; there was no fire.