

September 4, 2008

## **SENCER Summer Institute Features New Initiatives, Alumni Work**

This year's Summer Institute focused on new initiatives of the SENCER project and the mature and developing campus-based work that educators have created around the country. The 220 invited participants and facilitators took advantage of the lovely Santa Clara University to develop plans for campus-based innovations, to connect with colleagues from 76 institutions of higher education, high schools, governmental and non-governmental organizations, and to share results of their own initiatives in course/curricular reform.

The SSI 2008 plenary speakers shared insights on course design, the interplay of policy and education, and implementing course reforms. Cathy Middlecamp opened the Institute with her address, [Does This Plane Have Wings?](#), considering what must be done to make real changes in courses, and the importance of relevance in the curriculum. On Saturday, Jay Labov and Richard Duschl discussed the present and future of undergraduate STEM education and the role of public policy in their address, [4+1 Pillars of Undergraduate Education](#). Barbara Tewksbury led an engaging, active session on [Effective Assignments and Activities](#) on Sunday that encouraged participants to critically consider the construction of assignments and how they impact student learning and course goals. We invite you to access the PowerPoint presentations for each plenary by clicking on the hyperlinks above or by visiting the SSI 2008 page, where you can also access audio recordings for all plenary addresses.

The newly elected SENCER Leadership Fellows present at the Institute were honored at a special dinner on August 9<sup>th</sup>, for which Mercedes Talley delivered the keynote. Ms. Talley is program director for science, education, and the liberal arts for the W.M. Keck Foundation, and she commended the Fellows for their inspirational leadership on campus reform. You may listen to her remarks on the SSI 2008 page.

SENCER debuted seven course models this summer, all of which are available at <http://www.sencernet.net/Resources/models.cfm>. The models cover a variety of topics and come from a diverse set of institutions: two-year colleges, four-year universities, both public and private, and liberal arts colleges, and include a multi-institutional, international partnership. Model developers Cindy Kaus (Introductory Statistics with Community-Based Projects), Herve Collin (The Science of Sleep), Kirk Miller (Pregnancy Outcomes in American Women), and Pearl Fernandes (Life Science in Context: Sub-Saharan Africa and HIV/AIDS) were present at the Institute to discuss their work.

Pre- and post-Institute workshops allowed participants to explore areas of interest during intensive four-hour sessions. This year's choices included workshops on critical thinking, writing intensive activities, public health, formative assessment techniques, course design, assessing student outcomes, and an introduction to SENCER. Day-long, application-based workshops focused on (1) introductory STEM courses and (2) the scholarship of teaching and learning, a SENCER initiative that has been developing over the past two years.

We introduced several new features to this year's program, most notably the colloquia designed to engage both newcomers and alumni on topics of interest and challenge. Colloquia were organized by SENCER senior associates, fellows, and alumni and foci included the diversity, conservation biology, teacher preparation, and quantitative literacy. The colloquia were designed to be interactive, discussion-provoking sessions from which we hope publications and action will emerge. The colloquia were complemented by presentations of campus-based work during

concurrent sessions and a poster session. We are currently collecting all PowerPoint presentations used during the sessions, as well as electronic versions of posters and will continue to update the [SSI 2008 page](#) as we receive new documents.

The SENCER Centers for Innovation were introduced by Rich Keeling during a reception on Saturday night. Participants were encouraged to meet with the co-directors of each SCI during lunch on Sunday and learn how to get involved as well as what resources the SCIs offer to educators in their local areas. The SCIs are coordinating symposia and meetings this fall – the first of which will occur on October 4, 2008 at Franklin & Marshall College in Lancaster, PA. The topic will be “Preparing the Undergraduates of Tomorrow: The Critical Role of K-8 STEM Education,” and will be sponsored by the SCI-Midatlantic. Please visit the [SCI-Midatlantic web page](#) for information on how to register.

We thank all attendees and facilitators for their enthusiastic involvement and contributions to our eighth SENCER Summer Institute, and hope you will keep us apprised of your on-campus work over the coming year.

Please mark August 6-10, 2009 on your calendars – those are the tentative dates for SSI 2009, which will be held in Chicago and hosted by Harold Washington College (SCI-Midwest). More information and application details will be posted to the web site in the early fall.