

INSTRUCTIONAL ENDEAVORS AND ACTIVITIES

Fall 1998-Spring 2003

My instructional endeavors can be summarized by highlighting my innovations in six primary areas that align with the UHH strategic plan: course development, technological innovation, service-learning, cultivating excellence, research collaborations with students, assessment of student outcomes and needs. Each of the six primary areas will be discussed below and supporting documents are provided in the *Teaching and Student Evaluations Binders*. The *Teaching Binder* also contains additional evidence regarding my instructional endeavors and effectiveness such as directed studies (*Section 4*), professional development (*Section 5*), teaching awards (*Section 6*), peer evaluations (*Section 7*), recommendation letters (*Section 8*), and notes from students (*Section 9*).

Course Development

Since coming to UHH in 1998, I have demonstrated innovation by developing and teaching **nine** new upper-division courses; six of these courses have been already added to the curriculum. The courses are *Organizational Communication* (Com 444), *Communication and Conflict* (Com 442), *Nonviolent Communication* (Com 494), *Communication and Leadership* (Com 441), *Interviewing* (Com 443), *Family Communication* (Com 420), *Public Relations-Campaigns and Techniques* (Com 494), *Survey of Public Relations* (Com 494) and *Public Relations-Writing Intensive* (Com 444). As demonstrated by my syllabi, all of these courses have both theoretical and applied components and are based on innovative models of active learning (see syllabi in *Teaching Binder, Section 10*).

The addition of these courses has enabled the Communication Department to develop a concentration in organizational communication. The organizational communication concentration includes *Organizational Communication, Public Relations, Interviewing, Leadership and Conflict Management*. I have also taught three courses as writing intensives: *Leadership, Public Relations* and *Family Communication*.

In order to respond to the increasing need for communication courses by our growing number of majors (over 100% since I began teaching in 1998) while continuing to serve other disciplines, I have developed a large lecture course that is being taught for the first time this semester as Com 499: *Survey of Public Relations*. *Survey of Public Relations* will be proposed as the first in a sequence, to be followed by a public relations writing intensive course, *Techniques & Campaigns*. These two courses will replace *Public Relations* (Com 444). I am developing another new course, *Non-Violent Communication*, that will be taught in Spring 2003 as a sequel to *Communication and Conflict*.

Technological Innovation

In the area of technological innovation I have developed a web site, <http://www2.hawaii.edu/~beckerc/>, that informs current and prospective students about my courses, research, and activities. The site serves as a resource for current and prospective students by providing examples of ways that they can become involved with the discipline through research, service-learning, and activities of the UHH chapter of the National Communication Honor's Society. By showcasing former and current student activities the site inspires future students to take an active role in their education. It provides students with links to other communication resources such as the Communication Institute for On-Line Scholarship, which provides links to newsgroups, graduate schools, job listings, research topic generators, and search engines. I have also helped students and faculty members learn to use new technologies, such as PowerPoint, and introduced students to on-line communication research databases and neural network software in order to facilitate their research effectiveness (for reviewers that prefer a hard copy see *Teaching Binder, Section 1*).

Service-learning

Another instructional endeavor of mine has been to promote service-learning by implementing it in my classes and by acting as a member of the UHH Service-Learning Advisory Board. The UH-Hilo Service-Learning Summit defined service-learning as:

“an educational approach that fosters civic responsibility through active participation in an organized service that meet community needs. Students, Community members, Faculty, and Administration/Staff collaborate to create meaningful learning opportunities. Service-learning builds critical thinking and problem solving skills though a process that requires conceptualization, planning, implementation, and reflection. When service and learning are integrated, participants gain a heightened awareness of and commitment to building a better community” (see *Teaching Binder*, 2:1-2).

I first became involved with service-learning as a response to an initiative by the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) and the National Communication Association (NCA) to promote service-learning in the discipline. After attending a training at the NCA National Convention in 1998, I began to implement service-learning in my public relations classes (*Teaching Binder*, 2:3-4). Consequently, my students have created, implemented, and evaluated public relations campaigns for the UHH Athletic Department, Office of Student Affairs, Alternative Spring Break, Hilo Hospice, Homeless Shelter, Downtown Association, TREE-Native Forest Restoration and Education, Lehua Jaycees, Tough-Man Competition, and Hawaii Network for Cultural Preservation of Waipio Valley. Student final reflection papers suggest that service-learning is an excellent way to apply theories and concepts from the course in settings that allow them to gain valuable experience relevant to their professional and personal aspirations (see *Student Binder*).

In Fall 2002, I am experimenting with implementing a service-learning option in my lecture course *Survey of Public Relations*. Twenty-three students have selected this option, and have arranged placements with a variety of non-profit organizations including Bay Clinic, YMCA, Hamakua Health Center, Kupuna and Keiki Talk Story Program, the Veteran’s Center, American Lung Association, and Big Island Aides Foundation. Here on campus students are involved with service-learning projects with UH Athletics, Student Support Services, and the Department of Communication. Student placements are

providing them an opportunity to apply the material we are learning in class, such as writing news releases, event planning, intercultural communication, research and evaluation (See examples in *Teaching Binder*, 2:5-12).

Cultivating Excellence

I have promoted commitment to high academic achievement among our students by initiating and advising a UHH chapter of Lambda Pi Eta, the National Communication Association's Honor's Society. This mission of Lambda Pi Eta includes the promotion of undergraduate scholarship at a national level. Students are invited to be inducted into the Society after achieving 60 hours in college, 12 semester hours in communication, a cumulative GPA of 3.0, and a major GPA of at least 3.25. Students must also demonstrate a commitment to the field of communication by presenting their scholarship publicly or by becoming involved in community service. I have helped to focus campus attention on the achievements of these students by facilitating a formal induction ceremony where students receive a special sash to be worn at graduation, by encouraging honor students to present research at conferences, and by supporting student efforts to serve the community (see *Teaching Binder*, Section 3).

Research Collaborations with Students

Out of the 17 directed studies I have supervised, 6 involved student research projects. Most of the other directed studies were designed as service-learning or internships. I also supervised some directed studies for students who were closed out of upper division courses so that they could graduate on time. The directed study research topics have included diversity and conflict management, diversity and pedagogy, instructional communication, and women and technology (see *Teaching Binder*, Section 4).

I have also involved students with projects related to my own research interests. For example, last spring I was awarded a President's Diversity and Equity Initiative Grant (*Grant Binder*, Section 8). One of goals of this project was to use research and teaching to increase awareness of diversity issues at UHH.

To begin to meet these objectives, I incorporated a research component into *Organizational Communication* (syllabus in *Teaching Binder, Section 10*).

Students were placed into five teams based on previous course work, research experience and interests. Each team developed its own project for researching diversity at UHH, devised a research proposal, conducted the research, presented the results and analyses in class, and wrote individual reflection papers. The research evolved into five separate studies that included: 1) a content analysis of the student newspaper, *Ke Kalaheea*, 2) research related to the production of a UHH diversity training video, *Islands and Beaches* for which I served as an advisor (video is in *Student Box*), 3) a comparison of enrollment and representation statistics, 4) Twenty-four interviews with faculty, and 5) 106 interviews with students about diversity at UHH (see *Grant Binder*).

Additionally, students in the course also increased their knowledge about diversity through participation in diversity-related events: presentations, performances, and discussions. For example, eight students from the class received a grant from SEED (Students for Equity, Excellence and Diversity) to present their research proposals at the Conference on Multicultural Research held at UH Manoa. Thirteen students from the class attended the Pamantasan Conference on Filipinos in Higher Education, held at UHH. Nine students attended a one-day diversity training sponsored by the National Coalition Building Institute (see *Grant Binder*). All of the students in *Organizational Communication* attended and participated in a focus group prior to the final production of the diversity training video and participated in extensive class discussions. Two of the students in the class presented their research at the UHH Diversity Symposium on Sept 30, 2002 (see *Teaching Binder, Section 4*).

I organized the symposium with the help of a communication graduate that I mentor, Patrice-Clayburn Williams, who now runs the National Student Exchange Program, and Jim Mellon, Director of Student Services. I was advisor on the grant that Patrice and Jim wrote to produce the video (*Grant Binder, Section 8*) and my students and I also worked closely with Patrice and Jim on every stage of the

video's production, particularly the research phase. The first public presentation of the video, *Islands and Beaches: "Mainland and Local Student Interactions,"* was showcased at the symposium (see *Grant Binder*; "*Islands and Beaches*" video is in box).

In addition to providing a forum to discuss research that alumni and current communication students are doing, the symposium competitively selected presentations from **all** UHH students and faculty members. Ten students and nine faculty and staff members presented their research at the symposium that was attended by over 400 faculty, students, and community members. Consequently, the symposium provided students an opportunity to experience the excitement that public presentations of research can generate (see *Teaching Binder, Section 4, & Grant Binder*).

Assessment of student outcomes and student needs

Evidence of student outcomes from each of my courses includes students' papers (examples follow syllabi in *Teaching Binder, Section 10*), published press releases (*Teaching Binder, Section 2*) and the ability to conduct actual public relation campaigns (*Student Binder*). In the near future, I will be able to provide additional evidence of learning outcomes by incorporating their work into senior portfolios for the communication capstone course. I was able to advocate for the implementation of student portfolios as an assessment measure based on my participation in an assessment workshop at a National Communication Association conference (see *Service Binder, 3:4*). I am currently in the process of developing a battery of questions for each of my courses, developed from a rubric of course objectives, to be administered by the Communication Department in a senior exit examination.

Eighty-five percent of all my student evaluations are at or above the UHH norm. My students perceive my greatest teaching assets to be my enthusiasm (4.62), my knowledge of the subject matter (4.57) and my ability to facilitate class discussion (4.53). My student evaluations on global indicator #20, "Comparison to Other Instructors," are at or above the UHH norm in 20 out of 23 classes (see *Main Binder, Appendix B, or Student Evaluations Binder*).

In my last contract renewal document, I discussed at length the three classes that fell below the norm and how that could be prevented in the future. To summarize, in two sections of Introduction to Communication and one section of Organizational Communication there were either small groups of students or one student in particular that was disruptive to the class. I learned several things from dealing with these situations that seem rather obvious to me now but didn't at the time I was struggling with them. First, it is important to take a student or group of students who are disruptive aside and discuss problems as soon as they start to appear. I waited until the classroom climate became too tense and made the mistake of addressing my concerns publicly, which tends to alienate additional students. Second, I found that when students are disrespectful or publicly hostile to women or other groups, it is important to know techniques for managing these kinds of behaviors ahead of time (See *Teaching Binder, Section 9*). Third, it is important to pay attention to the demographic composition of the class in terms of the numbers of entry-level students.

For example, after my excellent ratings in the Introduction to Communication course in Spring and Fall 2000 (scores above the norm on ten indicators; at the norm on all others), I used the same model to teach the course the following year. However, starting in Spring 2001, a greater number of seats were held open for freshmen students in introductory communication courses. This generated a higher percentage of beginning students in my class, which changed the dynamics and needs of the class. Pedagogy that had worked so well previously when there were more upper level students in the class to take leadership roles needed to be changed when there were more freshmen. When I received a second set of low evaluations the following semester I then took notice that the demographic composition of the course had changed significantly and began to consider that the disruptive behavior may be at least partially due to frustration about the pace or complexity of course content. Due to departmental needs for upper division classes, I have not taught the Introduction to Communication course since Fall 2001.

However, now that I have identified the problem, I feel confident that I will be able to adjust my pedagogy to meet the needs of incoming students.

Another way that I have endeavored to meet student needs is to continue to be a student myself. I have participated in courses on indigenous perspectives and on Hawaiian health (see Teaching Binder, 5:3-4). This summer I enrolled in a Hawaiian Studies course at UHH (HS 151: *Ohana*). In addition to the knowledge I acquired about Hawaiian families that will make me more effective in teaching *Family Communication*, being a student in a Hawaiian Studies class allowed me to learn new pedagogical practices from the perspective of a student. I had the opportunity to experience again what it is like to want to please an instructor, to struggle with new terms and concepts, to work in a group comprised of individuals with different levels of ability and commitment, and to feel vulnerable in the classroom. That classroom experience allowed me to get further in touch with the needs of our students (see *Teaching Binder*, 5:2).

I am continually revising my courses based on students' feedback, incorporating the newest research, theories and pedagogical methods into my classes. Another way that I am responsive to student needs is by continually revising my courses and syllabi based feedback from students and student outcomes. In addition to written and quantitative evaluations, I frequently conduct midterm evaluations so that I can adapt my courses to the needs of my students while the course is still in session. This has proven to be an effective strategy, because it allows me to make changes based on their suggestions such as slowing down the pace, providing review sheets for tests, increasing group activities, and offering extra credit or opportunities to make-up missed work. Responding to student feedback during the course validates students' opinions and helps to facilitate a climate in the classroom that promotes discussion and mutual respect (see *Student Evaluations Binder*).