Teaching Critical Thinking: Are We Really Doing It?
AND
Data-driven Inquiry: Strategies for Problematizing the Material of your Discipline

Bill Roberson and Tina Reimers
University at Albany, SUNY

Friday, October 23
Milton Hall Room 50

Teaching Critical Thinking: Are We Really Doing It?
8:30–11:30 a.m.

Are we really successful at teaching critical thinking? In this interactive workshop participants will experience practical, immediately usable notions of critical thinking, which will help make visible what is often left invisible in the work of the university teacher. Participants will experience a sequence of increasingly complex learning activities designed to clarify the challenge of teaching critical thinking. The final outcome of the session will be participants’ application of “A Simple Plan,” which can be used by anyone, however skeptical, to develop assignments that promote critical reflection. Participants will design critical thinking exercises both in teams and individually, inside and outside their disciplines, and will discover how to design assessment strategies that measure the critical thinking students are doing.

Data-driven Inquiry: Strategies for Problematizing the Material of your Discipline
1:30–4:30 p.m.

How do we move from talking about critical thinking to doing it in the classroom? The answer lies in a “data-intensive” instructional approach, which transforms mundane textbook content into student learning activities that foster an “attitude of inquiry.” This session will demonstrate ways to problematize the material of a discipline so as to invite students into authentic engagement with significant discipline-specific questions. Participants will experience and analyze critical thinking tasks that place students into activities common among university faculty: inquiry, discovery, interpretation, invention, scholarship, and application of research. Each of these tasks illustrates different ways in which the common textbook material of academic study and research—the ordinary “data” of a discipline—can be transformed into inquiries that turn students into analysts, questioners, judges, decision-makers, and research designers. Session participants will be immersed in hands-on activities, and will begin developing their own Critical Thinking experiences for students.

Bill Roberson has been in pursuit of teaching excellence—for academic programs, for institutions, and for himself—since entering academe in 1987 as a faculty member and later as a faculty development professional. His primary area of interest is the design of courses, activities and assignments that ensure intellectual engagement of students and the development of their ability to think critically. His career in university faculty development includes positions at UNC-Chapel Hill and Indiana University. He has served as founding executive director of the Instructional Support Services division of the University of Texas-El Paso and in 2006 founded the Institute for Teaching, Learning, and Academic Leadership at the University at Albany, State University of New York.

Tine Reimers has been a university teacher on three continents, having taught in settings ranging from large Research I institutions, to small colleges. Her 20 years of classroom experience, combined with 14 years of faculty development experience have helped her build a thorough understanding of the strategies best suited for effective learning in higher education. After positions at UNC-Chapel Hill and Indiana University, she went on to direct the Center for Effective Teaching and Learning at UT-El Paso for 6 years, before serving as founding Executive Director of the NSF ADVANCE program at Cornell University. She was recently hired as Special Assistant to the Provost for Faculty and Program Development at the University at Albany, State University of New York.