Great Teacher Retreat Information

I am pleased to announce a terrific faculty development opportunity.

What:  A Great Teacher Retreat

When:  Monday, September 12 – Wednesday, September 14, 2005
       Begins at 10:00 a.m. on the 12th & concludes after lunch on the 14th

Where:  Kanuga Conference Center, 130 Kanuga Conference Drive,  
          Hendersonville, NC 28739, Telephone (828) 692-9136

For more information about Kanuga Conferences, see http://www.kanuga.org

Background:  The Great Teaching Seminar movement was founded over 30 years ago as a method for allowing teachers to discover what constitutes great teaching by talking to other teachers.  David Gottshall will be conducting the seminar and will be assisted by facilitators.

The idea is that about half of the faculty would attend the fall retreat and, if funding holds, have a spring event to include the other half.  The Great Teachers Retreat is not a typical conference.  The sessions are sequential—each building on the previous ones.  There are also evening sessions, and participants are expected to attend every session.  Additionally, you are expected to stay at the site.  This is part of the experience.

The deans will be working with you to determine the groupings for the conference.

Miscellaneous:  Comfortable attire is recommended.  Lodging is based on double occupancy.  If anyone needs or desires an individual room, they will be responsible for the additional costs for a single.  Additional information regarding travel will be forthcoming.
Homework: Please bring the following to the retreat

1) Forty (40) copies of a one-page paper describing a personally attempted instructional innovation. The paper may include a brief description of the instructional problems or circumstances that generated the attempt or a brief analysis of the reasons for its success or failure. Each participant will receive a copy of every paper. The discussion at some of the small group sessions will center around the content of these papers.

2) Forty (40) copies of a one-page paper describing a problem in instruction for which you have not yet found a satisfactory solution. This paper may analyze the problem or merely pose your questions for discussion. Copies of this paper will also be distributed to all participants and focus discussion for some small group sessions.

3) Any single teaching strategy or device (homemade or commercial, subject-oriented or universally applicable) which has enhanced our teaching effectiveness. It need not be astounding! In short, bring something from your bag of tricks. Presentation time is limited to 1-3 minutes.

4) One copy of a book which you have found helpful or inspiring. Your selection will become part of a browsing library at the retreat.

Additional Background:

The Great Teacher Movement was founded over 30 years ago as a method for allowing teachers to discover what constitutes great teaching by talking to other teachers. In 1969, David B. Gottshall founded the Great Teachers Seminar based on earlier staff development experiments of the late Roger H. Garrison.

This is a grass-roots faculty movement with no organization connections and no commercial interests. Its only focus is on performance in the classroom and on the nature of the great teacher. It is based on the notion that teachers learn to teach best from one another and that such learning is most effective if it occurs among participants from a random variety of teaching fields and experience. There is never a pre-planned agenda; through various means, the needs and talents of those present are discerned and a program is created out of that on site.

The focus is not on the teaching of specific disciplines, but rather on the ART of teaching itself. The emphasis is on the universals of teaching and on the special nature of those who are and will be great teachers. It is based also on the notion that, if properly tapped, the collective wisdom, experience and creativity of any group of practicing educators far surpasses that of any individual expert. The structure of the retreat evolves from an ongoing needs assessment as the seminar progresses. Underlying all activities of the retreat is the perpetual challenge to characterize and to define the GREAT TEACHER.
The Great Teachers Retreat is not a typical conference. The sessions are intense and sequential--each session building on the previous ones. These are also evening sessions and participants need to attend every session. Additionally, participants are expected to stay at the site of the Retreat--this is part of the experience.

Purposes of the Retreat include the following…

- To celebrate good teaching.
- To venture beyond the limits of our own specializations and environments in search of transferable ideas and the universals of teaching.
- To develop an atmosphere of introspection and self-appraisal by providing a relaxed setting and straightforward process where participants seriously review and contemplate their attitudes, methods, and behavior as teachers.
- To practice a rational analysis of instructional problems and develop realistic, creative approaches and solutions that address those specific problems.
- To exchange information and ideas by building an expanding network of communication among teaching faculty in higher education.
- To renew ourselves professionally and personally.

(Annually in North Carolina, a Great Teacher Retreat is held. It is coordinated by Steve Smith, the North Carolina Great Teacher Retreat Coordinator, who is with Richmond Community College.)