Teaching Artifact 2
Faculty Course Observations

This artifact includes:

- Course Observation by Dr. Jodi Haney
- Course Observation by Dr. Terry Herman
- Course Observation by Dr. Kristine Blair
To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter on behalf of Dr. Savilla Banister. During the Fall, 2010 semester, I “observed” Dr. Banister’s online EDTL 6180: ELearning course virtually via the BGSU Blackboard environment. Over the course of the semester, I had several opportunities to examine Dr. Banister’s design, instruction, and assessment practices. As such, it is with great pleasure that I write this peer observation letter.

Dr. Banister designed a course that is consistent with social-constructivist teaching philosophies. Students are actively engaged throughout the course through a project-based learning design framework. In addition, students are offered great autonomy and choice through these projects so that they can find their work and study authentic and worthwhile. The course is well organized and easy to navigate. Student success support structures including student models from prior semesters are found throughout the course. The flow from module to module is logical and consistent. The content provided (including reading materials and web resources) is of high quality and developmentally appropriate for graduate learners.

The instructional practices reflect student-centered and mastery learning approaches. Dr. Banister provides content needed for student success and surrounded the students by both instructor and peer support structures. The discussion board depicts highly professional conversations among peers. Dr. Banister is quick to offer students additional support and/or needed resources. Her communication skills are exceptional.

Assessment includes both formative and summative opportunities. The discussion board serves as a formative tool to gauge the degree of learning among the course participants. The actual eLearning project opportunities are excellent culminating experiences to showcase what students learned and achieved as a result of this course. Again, students are provided real opportunities to take their project in any direction needed for their own professional needs. The course assignments are highly consistent with the literature on effectively assessing adult learning.

I have worked under Dr. Savilla Banister on other on-line courses and committees, and each and every time I do so, I learn something more about technology and teaching myself. She is an excellent mentor to other faculty collaborators, as she possesses current knowledge and skills and conveys a “can-do” attitude that is contagious. Most importantly, she makes both her students and peer faculty members feel important and that they have something valuable to contribute to the learning community. She builds great confidence by doing so.
As such, I find Dr. Banister to be an exceptional instructor who has mastered the ability to design, implement, and assess technology education. Her flexibility and determination to meet students’ needs is highly admirable. She holds her students to high standards, and they attain them. I believe we are very fortunate to have Dr. Banister as a peer faculty member in STL. She is a master teacher in my eyes.

Best Regards,

Jodi J. Haney,
Professor, STL and DES
Course Observation For:
Dr. Savilla Banister, Associate Professor, College of Education & Human Development
Spring 2012
Course:
EDTL 6320: Technology Leadership and Professional Development

Observer:
Dr. Terry L. Herman, Associate Professor
Director, Distance Education and Alternative Learning @ Zane State College

Course Observation Process:
In my observation of the online course EDTL 6320, Technology Leadership and Professional Development, I used the Quality Matters™ (QM) Rubric for Online and Hybrid Courses 2011-2013 edition as a guide (http://qualitymatters.org/Rubric.htm). I have organized the observation around the eight general QM rubric elements with general comments at the end.

Online Course Review Elements:
1. Course Overview and Introduction
The course is well organized and consistent, yet interesting, in design and format. It is professional and attractive; and the navigation is clear and logical. It is evident from a student perspective what to do when entering the course (START HERE), where to find information, and how to contact the instructor. Dr. Banister has created a variety of highly professional and engaging videos to help students along every step of the way. Even if students did not read the clear and succinct introduction, watching the video would provide all the necessary information and a good dose of encouragement as well. I especially applaud Savilla’s use of the Canvas ePortfolio to make her introduction to her students. Including the link to the “Gramma Reads” video is another excellent example of Dr. Banister walking the walk and modeling the use of innovative presentation strategies.

2. Learning Objectives (Competencies)
Learning objectives are stated clearly from the student perspective and are measurable. The learning objectives align well with the first and fourth standards of the National Educational Technology Standards for Technology Coaches (NETS-C) with a focus on visionary leadership. Dr. Banister’s inclusion of the University’s Key Learning Outcomes help the students understand the importance of this course and its place in their curriculum.

3. Assessment and Measurement
The key assignments align with the learning outcomes and are rigorous, interactive, and creative in getting students to learn, assimilate, and apply new knowledge, and they establish a means to measure effective learning. Each assignment, including those that are ungraded, encourages students to take an active role in their learning. The exercises require critical thinking, creativity, and reflection. I was impressed with the clarity of the directions and parameters for the assignments. To further assist students in the creation of their artifacts, Savilla has provided examples of each of the projects.
The Study of Resource Impact assessment integrated an assignment in a previous course students had taken and took the process to the next level. This type of scaffolding highlights the interconnectedness and continuity of the curriculum the students are engaging.

4. Resources and Materials
Instructional materials were comprehensive, current, and contribute to the achievement of learning outcomes. The articles and videos were interesting and engaging. The organization of the table allows students to get a visual overview of the readings for the entire course, a big picture that will help them plan their time more effectively.

5. Learner Interaction and Engagement
Learning activities actively engage the learner and foster instructor-to-student, content to student, and student-to-student interaction. Requirements for student interaction are clearly communicated through assessment descriptions and accompanying rubrics. Discussion forums for each topic require thoughtful reflection and collaboration. Clear standards for instructor response and availability are stated in the syllabus. The inclusion of a special discussion forum for course questions and clarifications reassures students that there are no “stupid” questions. Very effective!

6. Course Technology
The course is delivered using BGSU’s pilot Learning Management System (LMS), Canvas. It also makes use of external web sites and technologies. The technologies are used creatively and innovatively to support the learning objectives and delivery of the course content. Most importantly, Dr. Banister’s skillful design of the course inspires students to explore, play, and discover through a multitude of technology suggestions, coaching, and modeling.

7. Learner Support
Learner support information and institutional policies are stated in the syllabus. Detailed rubrics for each assessment guide students in successfully engaging the activity. Dr. Banister’s desire to provide the highest level of learning support for her students is evidenced in the plethora of succinct, professional, and engaging videos explaining concepts and providing strategies for success. Savilla’s personality shines through in every aspect of the course but in this area most of all.

8. Accessibility
The course includes information for students on BGSU’s disabilities support services. All course concepts are presented in a variety of delivery formats allowing students to interact on a multitude of levels.

General Comments:
As the Director for Distance Education and Alternative Learning at Zane State College, as the former Director of Interactive Distance Education for All Learners at Bowling Green State University, and a reviewer for Quality Matters I review numerous online courses. Dr. Banister’s courses are exemplary. For this observation, I focused mainly on
EDTL 6320 Technology Leadership and Professional Development. In a formal Quality Matters review, this course would pass with flying colors as it meets or exceeds all of the eight defined standards as described above.

In addition, I would say again that Savilla’s usage of technologies in the online course development and delivery is highly creative and innovative. I’ve known Dr. Banister for many years and she is a dedicated teacher of not only her students but also her colleagues. She is an early adopter of technology and innovative pedagogical approaches. She is continuously researching and using the most current technologies and online pedagogies. What impresses me most is the fluidity and cohesion of the course design. The artifacts and elements are skillfully chosen or created to provide the optimum learning environment. It is a privilege to be asked to observe one of Dr. Banister’s courses. I am inspired by her skillful integration of content, pedagogy, collaboration, and technology to provide the best learning experience possible for her students.

Dr. Banister’s communication with her students is interactive and engaging. Her enthusiasm and passion for teaching and learning is evident in the course site and in her interactions with her students. Learning with Savilla as your guide is an exciting journey. She poses thoughtful, reflective questions in discussions and calls on students to learn, assimilate, and use new skills. She responds promptly and in depth and it is apparent that she is committed to their success.

The course activities align with learning objectives and it is clear from reading student postings that students are achieving learning outcomes and in many cases going beyond to assimilate personal and professional experiences in shaping new ideas and concepts. It is evident that students are inspired and excited by both the content and delivery. Dr. Banister’s course demonstrates the ideal of what an online learning experience should be… aligning activities to meet learning outcomes in a highly engaging, interactive, rigorous, and creative delivery format.
March 6, 2012

To: College of Education and Human Development
   Tenure and Promotion Committee

From: Kristine Blair, Professor and Chair
       Department of English

Re: Observation of Dr. Savilla Banister's EDTL 6310:
   Technology in the 21st-Century Classroom

During the Spring 2012 semester, I have been enrolled as an observer in Dr. Savilla Banister's online section of EDTL 6310: Technology in the 21st-Century Classroom. During my presence in the course, I have reviewed various aspects of the BGSU Canvas Interface in which the various curricular materials are housed. As someone who specializes in digital pedagogies, I was delighted when Dr. Banister asked me to observe her course, knowing that I would learn much about the potential of Canvas as a course management system.

In reviewing the online course syllabus, I have been impressed with the way in which Dr. Banister balances a range of course objectives, including the need to develop knowledge of techno-pedagogical theories and to assess how various online tools and practices impact teaching and learning. Equally important is the alignment between these objectives and actual course activities, notably a final teaching unit that fosters a strong synthesis of both pedagogical and technological competencies. For each unit, an assignment rubric is available, as are a range of sample projects to provide students with a strong sense of course expectations.

Because of Dr. Banister's expertise, it is no surprise that she is making full use of the Canvas course management system in this graduate-level seminar, ultimately serving as role model for the teachers who will be using similar tools themselves. Having taught online many times myself, I know how important it is to have a logistically accessible course and to utilize tools that help students successfully navigate the course space. Indeed, students are somewhat disoriented in new online learning environments. To that end, Dr. Banister's organization of the course into modules and employment of tools such as the Announcement feature to signal the transition between modules and activities is not only pedagogically sound but vital to students' success.
With regard to discussion activities, it is clear that Dr. Banister holds online graduate students to the same standards for participation as in a face-to-face class, assigning students to serve as group discussion leaders and providing a rubric for what constitutes successful leadership of such dialogues. Moreover, Dr. Banister provides a very useful sample discussion thread to show students how to introduce, comment upon, and synthesize dialogue, a crucial skill set in an online discussion. Such strategies document Dr. Banister's ability to hold students accountable and to enable a collaborative learning environment in which students are as responsible for knowledge making as the teacher.

Through her use of a range of web-based resources and her ability to utilize the affordances of social media tools such as asynchronous and synchronous dialogue and digital video, Dr. Banister models the best online teaching practices that this course is meant to develop among the students. Overall, I commend her for her efforts to meet the needs of practicing teachers through her innovative curriculum, and I admire the energy and enthusiasm she brings to her virtual classroom. Dr. Banister is an actively engaged teacher in the online environment and of great benefit not only to her students but also to the College of Education and Human Development. I immensely enjoyed my time observing this online course and learning from Dr. Banister's example.