

February 2011 Research Reporter



"The 'Thriving Quotient': A New Vision for Student Success" by Laurie Schreiner, Ph.D.

"Thriving" students "are fully engaged intellectually, socially, and emotionally."

Laurie Schreiner, Ph.D., Chair and Professor of Doctoral Higher Education, challenges *all* educators to help students "thrive" in her "The 'Thriving Quotient': A New Vision for Student Success" (*About Campus* [May-June 2010]), the first of three articles which she was invited to write for this publication. "Thriving" students "are fully engaged intellectually, socially, and emotionally. Thriving college students not only are academically successful, they also experience a sense of community and a level of psychological well-being that contributes to their persistence to graduation and allows them to gain maximum benefit from being in college." This is in contrast to the "surviving" student whose success is measured mostly by a transcript and diploma awarded. Her article describes "The Thriving Quotient", the instrument which Laurie Schreiner and her research team of doctoral students from APU have developed to measure thriving reliably; she notes how to use the results to help students maintain this positive ap-

proach to life. Key to thriving is the student being psychologically engaged at a deep level with the material to be learned: "Engaged learning occurs when students are meaningfully processing the material, making connections between what they already know or are interested in and what needs to be learned. They are focused and attentive to new learning opportunities and actively think about and discuss with others what they are learning. In short, they are energized by the learning process."

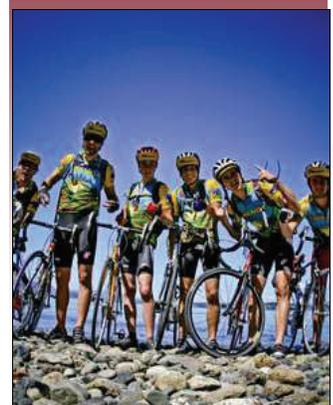
Thriving students also develop time management skills, breaking down projects into small steps which must be completed in order to reach their goals, and resiliency when disappointments occur. Indeed, "they don't give up; they try new strategies, they ask for help, and they stick with it until they finish." Their optimism leads them to build relationships with others different from themselves which in turn can result in openness, flexibility, creativity, and receptivity to new information.



Schreiner cogently suggests that thriving students can be cultivated through "(1) equipping students with an optimistic explanatory style, (2) helping students envision future success, and (3) teaching students to develop and apply their strengths." Rather than immediately evaluating students for their weaknesses, and then prescribing remedial treatments for them during their initial months on campus, which drains their self-confidence, the potentially thriving students learn what their strengths are and build on these. Colleges and universities may increase their retention of students when "we shift from failure prevention to success promotion."—
Carole J. Lambert



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“Teaching Philosophy: Instilling Pious Wonder or Vicious Curiosity?” by Teri Merrick, Ph.D.



Teri Merrick, Ph.D., Chair and Associate Professor of Theology and Philosophy, advocates exposing students to “wonder” which will lead them to greater “hospitality” in her “Teaching Philosophy: Instilling Pious Wonder or Vicious Curiosity?” (*Christian Scholar’s Review* 39.4 [Summer 2010]). Noting that Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, and Alfred North Whitehead all advocate “wonder”, she posits historian Carolyn Walker Bynum’s definition of “medieval ‘wonder’ as the propensity to linger with and over that which lies beyond our fear and current conceptual grasp.” Merrick adds, “wonder. . . is. . . the emotional response prompted by encountering the novel, the rare, or the variable.” Indeed, during the Middle Ages, “[a] sustained sense of wonder was considered indicative of a student’s pious appreciation of the sovereignty, immediacy, and necessity of God’s relationship to each created entity.” Hospitality results from this kind of wonder because the beholder of the unusual will welcome “what God intends to reveal.”

This concept of wonder was less honored when the scientific approaches of Modernity disparaged the exception in favor of prevailing theories which explained the usual actions of phenomena. René Des-

cartes revived the concept, and it is affirmed by current scholars Luce Irigaray and Martha Nussbaum. Wonder is a “predominantly delightful, not fearful or awe-inspiring, awareness that one is presented with an ever-surprising and unique particular.” Such wonder leads to an “authentic Christian hospitality [which] demands that we engage in the risky business of extending welcome even when and perhaps because this may be the first step in revealing an entirely new system for determining value and structuring our relationships.”

Merrick concludes her article with strategies for developing wonder and hospitality in students, complete with specific classroom examples of when she has done just this. Citing Kelly Bulkeley, Merrick experiences wonder as a twofold progression: “First, there is ‘a sudden decentering of the self when faced with something novel and unexpectedly powerful.’ Second, there must be ‘an ultimate recentering of the self in response to new knowledge and understanding.’” The professor must help students through these two stages *hopefully*, guiding them toward hospitality and away from “curiosity” which Paul J. Griffiths defines as “ownership and mastery to which the proper response is the gesture of control.” This may

include private meetings with students and service learning assignments which verify experientially the values that may be temporarily put in question. Merrick notes, “service-learning projects may help maintain a student’s relationship to God or church based on orthopraxy even if a genuine orthodoxy cannot yet be articulated and affirmed.” Her article gently challenges both professors and students to mature beyond their comfort zones and to trust that God is always one or more steps ahead of them as they journey into wonder and hospitality.—Carole J. Lambert



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Mirrored Reflections: Reframing Biblical Characters.



CONTRIBUTORS

(from left, clockwise) [Joy Lentz Wong](#), [Melanie Mar Chow](#), [Kirsten Oh](#), [Deborah Hearn Gin](#), [Beverly Chen](#), [Young Lee Hertig](#), [Chloe Sun](#) (not shown: [Grace Choi Kim](#))

Hertig, Young Lee and Chloe Sun, eds. *Mirrored Reflections: Reframing Biblical Characters*. Eugene, OR., Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2010.

With a special celebration and paneled discussion hosted by the School of Theology in November, the book *Mirrored Reflections: Reframing Biblical Characters* was released this fall by members of the Asian American Women on Leadership (AAWOL) and introduced to the APU community.

Deborah Hearn Gin, a long-time APU faculty member, is a contributor as well as a leader in the AAWOL organization. The book also contains contributions from adjunct faculty members **Beverly Chen** and **Young Lee Hertig** (who serves as one of the editors).

Timothy Tseng, Executive Director of the Institute for the Study of Asian American Christianity, writes in his preface that “*Mirrored Reflections* is an important effort to bridge the gaps between real women’s lives and the Bible. It is written by Asian American Christian women for Asian American Christian women and for the wider Christian community.” I concur. It is also a marvelous example of integrating biblical scholarship, sociology, leadership studies, and faith. It would be an excellent resource in a wide range of classes, and I feel richer for having read it.

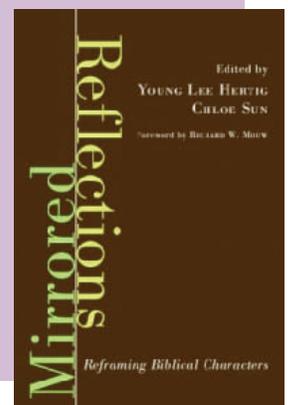
Hertig begins with a framing essay which utilizes the concepts of *yin* and *yang* as a common interpretive thread through the three parts of the book which are depicted as “Journeys toward Redemption”, “Journeys toward Wholeness”, and “Journeys toward Liberation”. Each chapter concludes with questions for both personal and ecclesial reflection.

In the three chapters that comprise Part One, the biblical characters of Queen Vashti, Esther, Bathsheba, and Irit (Lot’s wife) are studied to see their engagement in their cultures and to discover how we might learn from them. Seeking to understand how power is engaged, we read about Vashti and Esther. Discovering the roles of silence and

speaking, we see how Bathsheba uses and finds her voice. Irit, Lot’s wife, is considered through how she is best remembered—for looking back. When is it helpful to look back (instead of forward), and when might it be harmful? Kirsten Oh, the author of this chapter, studies Irit’s motivation for looking back by reflecting on the Korean term *jeong* (encompassing compassion, affection, solidarity, relationality, vulnerability, and forgiveness).

The chapters in Part Two represent “Journeys toward Wholeness”, and the authors reflect on the lives of Ruth, Hannah, Mary, and Martha—biblical women whose journeys illustrate their own. **Deborah Hearn Gin**, Director of Assessment Analysis and Education in the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment and Assistant Professor of Ministry at Haggard Graduate School of Theology, writes about learning from Ruth’s experience of living in more than one cultural dynamic as a journey toward identity. Though born in the U.S., Gin is a product of parents who emigrated from Korea; as a result, she struggled to learn how to navigate both Korean and North American cultural expectations. As a Moabite woman, Ruth also had a variety of expectations placed upon her—widow, daughter-in-law, daughter, foreigner, and servant, and Gin describes this as multivocality. Ruth is able to use all of her experiences in shaping who she is and how she relates to others, and these multiple contexts are informed by the added perspective of her experiences. Gin writes that multivocality can be a great asset in leadership development—as an exploration of one’s identity can begin an awareness of navigating a variety of contexts and passions, and one can recognize and value interdependence and collaboration among disciplines.

In Part Three, “Journey toward Liberation,” Elizabeth and Mary are discussed in relation to the idea of competition and pressure and how Elizabeth could rejoice in Mary being the one to be the mother of Jesus. Priscilla and Aquila are studied as role models for a marriage partnership, and Jesus’ interaction with the woman at the well serves as a reflection on the role of spiritual mentors. In her concluding essay, Hertig writes, “Looking at biblical women through a mirror, we found our own stories reflecting back at us.” Indeed.—Liz Leahy





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