

## **Book Review**

### ***Aligning for Learning, Strategies for Teaching Effectiveness***

Donald Wulff, Editor (Anker, 2005)

Review by

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Dr. Donald Wulff has been a highly esteemed leader in the area of teaching and learning in higher education, most recently as Director for the Center for Instructional Development and Research at the University of Washington. Although he passed away earlier this year, he has left the world of SOTL with many valuable research projects and publications.

Dr. Wulff conducted research on teaching effectiveness over two decades ago that led to the "Alignment Model" of teaching and learning. Simply put, the alignment model acknowledges that a combination of Professor, Student, and Content leads to learning. For optimal success, this combination needs to have a balance of rapport, structure, engagement, and interaction. As Wulff points out in the first chapter of this book, "An essential point of the model is that the components and their interrelationships are dynamic and ever changing as opposed to fixed or static." In *Aligning for Learning, Strategies for Teaching Effectiveness*, Wulff has used a team of experts to examine how the alignment model can be used in a variety of different instructional situations. It is an excellent volume, useful in the whole, and also for each of its individual parts.

Initially, it might seem that this book would be most appropriate to seasoned professors looking for a more advanced way to alter or assess their instructional practices. While this is certainly a valid use of the book, its greatest value may well be as a tool to the novice instructor. For instance, the fifth chapter, "Aligning Evaluation Practices," written by Wayne Jacobson and Margaret Lawrence, provides excellent approaches to student evaluations, an area often of great concern to young professors. Of particular value are their suggested ways to have students think about how they are learning the material throughout the course, rather than just at the end when presented with an evaluation form. As more and more campuses increase class size, chapter 6, "Aligning in Large Class Instruction" by Karen Freisem and Lisa Coutu, is recommended reading for those professors, both new and veteran, presented with this new challenge of large classes. Their suggestion to make the class as a whole feel like a unique entity is particularly compelling. It is hard to imagine a present-day volume on higher education that does not mention technology. Chapter 13, "Aligning Online," by Margaret Lawrence, Bonnie O-Dell, and Laurie Stephan, would be an excellent resource for instructors utilizing on-line discussions. Of interest to all instructors would be Chapter 16, Wulff's "Aligning for Learning: Synthesis and Conclusions." Of particular value are his thoughts on to what degree instructors should heed student perceptions, acknowledging that the instructor is the "expert."

*International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*

<http://www.georgiasouthern.edu/ijstol>

Vol. 2, No. 2 (July 2008)

ISSN 1931-4744 @ Georgia Southern University

Aligning for Learning, Strategies for Teaching Effectiveness will be a valuable addition to any instructor's library. Even those not interested in the specifics of the alignment model will find invaluable tools for improving teaching and learning. As Wulff himself writes in chapter 16, "Remember that the ultimate goal is that students learn."