A TELECONFERENCE SEMINAR ON APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS

This past year we experimented with a new format for our PhD seminar in applied behavior analysis. Each week our autumn quarter seminar entailed a teleconference with a guest faculty member from another university. The new format proved so successful that I wanted to share the idea with colleagues at other graduate training programs.

Here's how our version of "reach out and touch a behavior analyst" works. Both students and faculty suggest potential guest faculty, and each student is responsible for inviting and arranging the details for at least one behavior analyst's participation. The letters and telephone calls necessary to arrange someone's participation provide students with functional practice in professional communication.

If the invited behavior analyst agrees to participate—no one has yet refused—we request an up-to-date curriculum vita with two of his or her published papers checked. The week before a particular behavior analyst is scheduled, the student responsible for hosting that individual distributes copies of the identified papers. A routing slip is attached to the guest faculty member's vita so that students can learn more about his or her background and research record prior to the session. (Examining the accomplishments of some of the leaders in our field is an education in itself. The vitae of guest faculty serve as impressive, and we hope not too intimidating, models for scholarly achievement and professional service.)

Students are required to prepare a minimum of two questions based on their reading of the selected papers. Students are not required to ask their prepared questions if our guest's comments stimulate other questions that seem more important at the time. However, requiring students to come prepared has worked well in providing a good set of questions with which to begin the seminar.

A telephone call is placed to the guest faculty person at the prearranged time. The only equipment necessary is a speakerphone that attaches to any standard telephone. (There are several com-

parably priced speakerphones available. We use a Panasonic Easa-Phone®, Model No. KX-T1020; cost \$50.00. The sound quality of this equipment has been excellent at our end. Guest faculty indicate they can hear us clearly, but that it takes a little while to get used to listening to people who sound as if they are talking from "the bottom of a hole.") Seminar sessions run from 1 to 1½ hr; long enough to discuss several issues in detail, but not so long as to unduly wear out our colleagues who are graciously giving of their time.

Although guest faculty are able and willing to provide specific answers to most of our students' questions, the teleconference sessions invariably generate additional questions. Guest faculty will typically suggest additional sources for pursuing these topics, and they usually leave the seminar group with one or more issues to ponder.

The current cost for a 1-hr direct dial call placed with AT&T from Columbus, Ohio, to Seattle, Washington—the most expensive call to any continental U.S. city—on a weekday during normal working hours with no discounts is \$15.00. The entire cost for conducting the quarter-long teleconference seminar was about \$250, including the one-time cost of the speakerphone. This does not include duplication costs, but these costs could justifiably be borne by the students who do not have to purchase a textbook for the seminar.

Benefits

The teleconference seminar has given our students the opportunity to interact directly with behavior analysts who live and work far beyond the campus of Ohio State University. In effect, the teleconference format has expanded our faculty to include many of the individuals whose empirical and conceptual contributions have helped create and shape contemporary behavior analysis. Topics examined in the seminar have been as diverse and stimulating as the interests and personalities of our guest faculty. Last autumn quarter's guest faculty members and some of the issues discussed were: Brian Iwata, the development and adoption of controversial default technologies; Don Baer, the anal-

ysis of generalization technology; Frank Rusch, school-to-work transitional programming for students with severe handicaps; Julie Vargas, instructional design flaws in computer-assisted instruction; Jim Tawney, history of behavior analysis in special education; Rob Hawkins, the selection of target behaviors; Tom Lovitt, charting academic performances; and Jon Bailey, using behavior analysis in the workplace and community. An audio recording of each week's seminar, copies of the papers studied, and the guest faculty member's vita comprise a permanent record of each seminar session.

The teleconference format provides students with an opportunity to talk with accomplished behavior analysts in a supportive environment. During the course of a 10-week quarter we witnessed a significant improvement in the quality and proficiency of our students' verbal behavior.

Give a teleconference seminar a try—reach out and touch a behavior analyst!

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