

"although students possessed strong speaking, reading and writing and memorization skills, they lacked familiarity with critical skills, reasoned argumentation and intellectual pluralism. Their understanding of the learning process was comprised of dutiful classroom attendance, mechanical note-taking, memorization of 'facts,' and regurgitation of these materials on tests."

- For myself, I have found several strategies to be remarkably adaptive and constructive. The first of these is the empowerment of students – to allow students the ability to take risks, make choices (and mistakes) for themselves, and to disagree with both their instructors and the "official story." This generation of Slovak university students are smart, sophisticated and realistic – and they are quite accustomed to both the presence and the relative strengths and weaknesses of foreign lecturers. To treat students otherwise may not be a constructive exercise.

Thomas Murphy, Ph.D.

Institutional Profile

"I am proud to have been a part of the process of shaking up standard teaching methodologies, providing the impetus for alternative academic options, and delving into the complexities of cross-cultural exchange in the classroom environment. I wouldn't trade it for anything – in fact, I have learned far more from my students and colleagues than they ever could have hoped to learn from me."

Thomas Murphy, Ph.D. British and American Studies Program, Philosophical Faculty, Presov University, Presov, Slovakia

I have learned not only how to satisfy students' curiosity about the field but also how to spur it.

Novicius program was organized jointly by CEP and Jan Hus Educational Foundation and operates in the Czech and the Slovak Republics under the patronage of Zora Vidovencova of the CEP and Miroslav Pospisil of the JHEF. Novicius was designed as a junior faculty development project. Its principle aim is to assist the education of the new generation of university lecturers in the field of social sciences. Within the program, emphasis is placed on introducing new teaching methods designed to promote students' critical and analytical thinking skills, thus preparing them to better utilize their knowledge and abilities. The program functions as a cooperation between a specialist from a Western institution and a Czech or Slovak Ph.D. candidate or assistant lecturer. Within this partnership, CEP scholars serve as mentors. JHEF provides financial assistance for both participants, as well as for the purchase of academic literature.



Tom Murphy and Ivana Takacova, a Slovak colleague and former Novicius mentee

- In sum, my participation in the Novicius-Junior Faculty Development Project has been enormously rewarding. What I expected at the start was mainly an opportunity to learn facts in particular, the information to be shared with students later in the teaching process. However, I acquired much more than that. My Novicius training proved to be a complex and multifaceted experience, vital for my teaching since it has provided me with a multitude of invaluable suggestions. It has been a "concert" of various methodological approaches and student-centered activities serving as a fruitful inspiration for me. I am much obliged to Professor Pitz and CEP, as well as the *Jan Hus Educational Foundation*. The worthwhile example, set by a CEP lecturer, of encouraging students' critical thinking, argument build-up, and analysis of the facts is being continued. The seeds Novicius sowed in Presov are beginning to sprout.

Ivana Takacova

- At the Department of British and American Studies at Presov University, two pairs of CEP mentors and mentees have worked together so far. In 1996–1997 ARTHUR PITZ supervised the training of IVANA TAKACOVA, and in the following year PATRICIA LANGOVA worked under the guidance of THOMAS MURPHY. The program has already borne fruits. Ivana Takacova has been lecturing at the department since September 1997 and has taken over the courses previously taught by CEP lecturers. To enhance her academic preparation, she has been awarded a Fulbright scholarship for study in the United States in 1999–2000. Upon her return from this study she hopes to continue her cooperation with CEP through the Eastern Scholar program.



Building of Philosophy Faculty of Presov University, Slovakia