

ALL ABOUT

MENTORING

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ALL ABOUT MENTORING



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Reassignment Connections

During a quarter-time reassignment to the Mentoring Institute, 2004-2005, Reed Coughlan, mentor at the Utica location of the Central New York Center (with the help of Stephanie Cunningham, technical support specialist), developed a set of materials designed to help mentors introduce adult students to online, issue-oriented bibliography building and research. This work was, in part, the result of many individual and group discussions that Reed conducted with mentors around the college. His focus was on our mentoring practices, specifically on that part of mentoring that involves helping students to acquire information literacy.

Reed Coughlan's *Guide to Databases and Research* can be found in Mentorsite (<http://www.esc.edu/Mentorsite>), either in the "Resources for Mentors" section, or in Quicklinks under the "Learning Resources" tab.

EDITORIAL



Tutorial

“Lecturing on navigation While the ship is going down.”

W. H. Auden
(as quoted in “Toward a Conception of Sociology” by K. H. Wolff [undated manuscript])

About a year ago, the sociologist Kurt Wolff died. I met Kurt in the early '80s as a result of a letter (really a fan letter) that I had sent him after reading his book, *Surrender and Catch*. (Reidel, 1976) Wolff, it seemed to me, was an unusual, even amazing man: a Jew, born and educated in Germany, caught in Italy during World War II; a student of Karl Mannheim; a noted translator of the classic works of Durkheim, Weber and Simmel; a painter and poet; and for many years, with his friends and colleagues Herbert Marcuse and Maurice Stein, a professor of sociology at Brandeis University.

I initially wrote to Wolff not only because of his intimate connection to ideas and worlds to which I was attracted, but for another reason: in *Surrender and Catch* and, as I was to learn, in almost everything he wrote, Wolff displayed a truly distinctive voice – one more typical of a post-modern writer of fiction with an obsessive autobiographical bent, than of a social theorist taking on the “grandest” questions of society and human life.

But even more surprising, Wolff had done an incredible thing. In *Surrender and Catch*, he included excerpts from his students' papers, transcripts of dialogues from classes and commentaries on these varied texts.

There they were in the thickness of Wolff's layers and layers of social-autobiographical critique, his reflections on reflections, his efforts to start and wonder aloud and (often frustratingly, even for the rather patient reader) to start again; there they were: his students' words and his reflections on them. Obviously, this brilliant guy, this big deal European professor, often prickly and aloof (he once snapped at our then five year-old son to quiet down because he was talking) cared deeply about his students. It seemed just right that the dedication of *Surrender and Catch* reads: “To my (fellow) students, and to some of them (of course) in particular.”

These words were more than empty gesture, more than easy caring. In this book and in myriad writings in which he played with his somewhat exotic brand of the sociology of knowledge, Wolff tried to work out what he meant by “cognitive love,” a wonderful phrase that sits at the heart of his theorizing. How is it possible, he questioned his readers – and of course himself-as-“fellow student” – to attend to “an encounter with fellow human beings, an overwhelming presence, a present that no longer is different from past and future, but annuls temporal distinctions” (*Survival and Sociology* 7)? How is it possible, he might have asked, to insist that we stay with and wonder about what is common to all human beings: the desire to find meaning, the desire to ask questions and to be heard, the desire to make sense of our lives together? How can this quality of “love” and care inform our pedagogical practices?

In one marvelous section of *Surrender and Catch*, Wolff describes a “senior tutorial” in the Brandeis Sociology Department (1961 - 62) that, as he explains, “had originated in the demand of students for a course during their last year in which they would discuss matters of common interest” (221). It seems that none of his colleagues wanted to teach what we might describe as this “study group” (a perfect example of which it surely was). The professors couldn't figure out what a topic would be: student interests were just too disparate. Of course, as I would expect he would, Wolff “thought of it as an exciting if grave risk.” And he proceeds to describe the group's initial gathering:

“‘What does ‘tutorial’ mean?’ I asked. Nobody knew. ‘it comes from *tueri*,’ I said,

‘to look at, to take care of, to protect. This means, presumably, that as your ‘tutor’ I am supposed to take care of you. What does this mean?’ Again, nobody knew. ‘I imagine,’ I answered my question, ‘that if we lived in an orderly society it would mean that I check on your education in sociology and try to improve it before you are thrown out into the world. But we hear so much and talk so much about this *not* being an orderly society but an anomic society, one in which guiding traditions are weakened, in which people often don't know what to do, and perhaps some of you don't either some of the time. Let's take this seriously and ask what it *then* means for me to take care of you – to take care of you in a *disorderly* society. What does it mean?’ There was no answer this time either, but I kept on. ‘The only thing I can think of that it can mean,’ I argued, ‘is that I help you to take care of yourselves. But who are you, yourselves? Or perhaps when are you most yourselves?’ Silence again. I suggested that they were most nearly themselves when they were unusually and particularly happy or unhappy, felt in heaven or felt desperate, in short, when they were thrown out of routine (when, as I came to put it much later, they had bracketed the mundane world or been expelled from it). But instead of talking so abstractly, I read them a few descriptions of such extraordinary states. I also asked them not to worry about the relation between what would come and sociology; this relation would emerge in good time” (221-222).

So as they studied C. P. Snow, Henry Miller, James Agee, Rilke, Rousseau, and Karl Mannheim (among others), and as students wrote and read their papers aloud and worked with their fellow students' comments and questions – all of which the author wants us, his readers, now, to see – Wolff offers us a glimpse of his care for this “grave” enterprise.

And too, in creating and saving this rich transcript, Wolff gives us important clues about our work and responsibilities as “tutors” today. He reminds us that amidst so much change and so much “disorder,” we need to remember when we are “most nearly [our]selves,” and in so doing, what we mean by care, and how we can take care of ourselves, our students, and each other.

Alan Mandell

Transformations at the Crossroads: General Education and Student Learning

Deborah Holler and Nikki Shrimpton, Central New York Center

(Note: Portions of this article will appear in “Safe Crossings: Transformations at the Intersections of Art and Science” in the proceedings of the 2005 Conference of the Adult Higher Education Alliance, Boston.)

“**Y**ou mean we have to observe a place outdoors?” Kiera implored the first night of our new study, *The Nature and Meaning of Place*. “I’m a city girl,” she moaned. “To me, being outdoors means that a lot of weird things get on you ... bugs and dirt and fungus!” Thus began the first night of our experiment in interdisciplinary studies designed to meet general education requirements in the natural sciences and the arts. Initially, our challenge was to develop an academically sound group study that fit into student degree program plans already in place, and that also appealed to a wide variety of student interests. During our three year partnership, we learned about the ways that interdisciplinary studies, especially those involving creative self expression, offered opportunities for transformative learning and community building. As mentors, we knew that the challenge for students stepping into unknown territories across the disciplines was daunting.

The Syracuse fall term flier promised students that during the *Nature and Meaning of Place* group study they would, “... explore the relationship of arts and science as ways of understanding the natural world ... learn about and practice field observations ... and also express their observations in a creative way through writing, visual or performance art.” The study included components in the arts and natural sciences, and intersecting learning activities that were pursued independently as well as during group meetings, and designed

to meet general education requirements in both areas.

- **Arts** – This sequence began with a “show and tell” discussion of meaning centered around photos of students’ selected natural places. Students also were assigned readings in poetry, nature writing and environmental literature, followed by a free-writing activity in which they imagined their chosen place with sensory images. This was followed by a creative writing assignment. Next,



Deborah Holler and Nikki Shrimpton

students viewed and discussed a slide show of representations of nature in fine and applied arts. They discussed proposals for final creative projects and presented the completed creative projects at our last group meeting.

- **Natural Science** – This sequence began by tapping into creative thinking with a brainstorming session focused on the initiation of the inquiry process. After observing their chosen places, students were encouraged to engage in a problem-finding activity and to ask questions that were informational in order to develop an experiment that they could then carry out. Students read excerpts from an environmental

text and discussed environmental issues associated with their chosen place. As a final activity, students wrote a research paper on an environmental issue relevant to their chosen place.

That first night of the group study we met a diverse group of students, all in their first contract. The group included Kiera, an artist, musician and gifted writer; and Larry, an assistant teacher in eighth grade science and an emerging actor. Both identified themselves as being “urban” in their background and experience. Larry, however, had relatives in the “country” and a Cherokee grandmother who taught him something about gardening and plants. Hillary, whose work is also featured here, enrolled as an independent study. She lived adjacent to a nature preserve where she walked daily and expressed an ongoing relationship with the natural world. We introduced *The Nature and Meaning of Place* by requesting that students bring a picture or other object associated with a place in the natural world that had special meaning to them. Their individual experiences in this study represent

crossings not only across the intersections of arts and science, but crossings into the academy itself. In their own words, they tell their stories of transformation.

Kiera

This was one of the most spiritually enriching projects and classes that I have ever taken and I feel like I’ve learned – I actually feel like I learned. Not just as a student, but as a person.

Kiera had a lifetime of experience as a visual artist and had worked as a musician, DJ and music critic for an alternative newspaper. She was a night person and a raconteur who entertained us all with her engaging, ironic worldview. In the introductory discussion,

Kiera expressed consternation at the idea of describing a relationship with an outdoor place, and chose to tell about her friends' gardens since she had relationships with the people who had relationships with their gardens. In her creative project, self-described as an illustrated assemblage garden journal, she tells about her initial experience with plants:

In my early 20s, when I was still a tattooed, Mohawk-coiffed, boot-wearing terror, I decided it might be a good idea to ease out of my life as a drunken, shrieking thug ... one suggestion I got was, "Get a plant and learn to be nurturing." ... Unfortunately, even something as agriculturally rudimentary as a houseplant was beyond my experience as a strictly urban animal. My try at expanding my internal life quickly led

to the deaths of not one or two, but 21 innocent plants inside of a year.

Kiera decided that she would observe her friend's garden since it was close by, and, having a social context, it seemed nonthreatening. She visited the garden often during the fall and early winter, at first recording dated observations in text and drawings. She tells us that in order to observe closely she "needed to shed a lot of perceptual noise."



Figure 1: Kiera's new houseplant in October



Figure 2: Kiera's closely observed garden



Figure 3: Kiera observes plant forms

Kiera initially struggled with developing a field experiment. She was daunted by the prospect of doing science. After listening to the ideas presented by the other students at the brainstorming session, she tentatively offered the observation that two clumps of the same plant in her friend's garden were significantly different in height and growth habit. She went on to hypothesize that it might be that they had differing exposure to sun, rain and wind, and proposed an experiment to test that hypothesis. Her report from the experiment included data she collected on

sunlight, precipitation and relative wind speeds for each clump. She had clearly developed an understanding of the methods scientists use and also had learned to read the natural world. Her creative journal tells about her experience learning to do fieldwork in natural science:

By the third visit, my brain quieted down and I started seeing what was in front of me Then I started thinking of questions about each new thing I observed – questions just came to mind ... pretty soon I was scribbling away like mad ...

Kiera not only learned about examining the natural world by asking questions as a scientist; she also learned about herself as an artist. After her initial experience recording and sketching in her field journal she found that "being in the garden was very different from sitting in our classroom thinking about being in the garden ... What I had expected was quickly dwarfed by what I actually experienced." After finding that "... my illustration abilities are limited ... (not) capturing the intensity of what I was seeing," Kiera "... decided to switch to a digital camera instead. It felt right – as though I was letting the garden speak for itself." Ultimately, Kiera decided to "eschew the whole dated diary motif" and combine field notes, artwork, photos and collage images into a "concise but personal narrative" that is "a satisfying reflection of the relationship I had with my chosen place." Her transformation in the arts is written into the artist's statement that accompanied her final project:

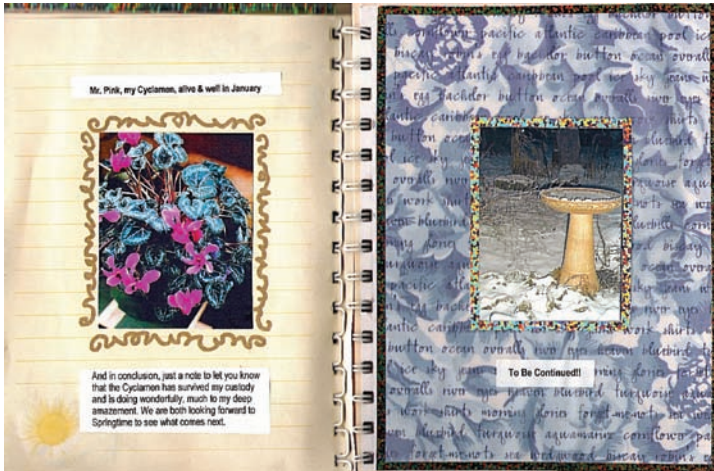


Figure 4: Kiera's thriving houseplant in January

There is a vine-like motif that I have incorporated in pretty much all of the art I've done in the last five years, a combination of a curling vine and the look of graffiti writing that I love. Until this project, I had not given much thought to that squiggling, flowing noodle that is a recurrent accent in so much of my work. I had certainly only dimly acknowledged that it is indeed a design borrowed from nature and modified by my own urban experience ... If you had asked me prior to this class, however, I doubt I myself would have said that any of my art has a nature-inspired aspect.

Kiera's post course self-assessment clearly states the conditions and outcomes of transformative learning:

conscious notice of before (and) started asking myself questions about what I noticed ... It felt as though the scientific curiosity was peaking (sic) through into my life ...

I also started looking at art in a different way, started noticing motifs taken from nature ... even in my own art work. It is a new experience to have a class I am taking in school actually affect my brain in my everyday life ... although in an ideal world, one would sort of hope it would be part and parcel of all successful college experiences.

Larry

Larry came to the study with several years experience as a teaching assistant in science at the local science and math charter school. Interestingly, although he was familiar



Figure 5: Larry's rocks bring forth new life

with scientific techniques, equipment and terminology, he did not have a strong conceptual understanding of science and was hesitant about developing a field experiment. He appeared not to be able to make a connection between the science he was involved with in his worklife and the processes of observation and problem finding. During the brainstorming session, he sat at the fringes for a while until he was sure that it was a nonthreatening discussion. He then mentioned that he had noticed different things growing in the area of the park where the water was flowing quickly, compared to the lake area where water movement was sluggish. When he brought his binder back to the next meeting he had collected samples from the two sites, examined them under the microscope, identified organisms present, and drawn conclusions about the water quality at each site. He also demonstrated development of skills in observation and reflection, as shown by a caption that accompanied a slide in his final project, a multimedia presentation on Emerson Park.

Larry's creative project not only demonstrated his growth as a student of natural science, but also showed his emerging aesthetic appreciation for the natural world. His slide show, based on both historic and original photographs of the park, incorporated music and told about the ways in which the surrounding community interacted with the park, as well as the way in which his close observation and aesthetic appreciation awakened a spiritual response to place.

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Figure 6: Larry's stairway



Figure 7: Hillary's walking path

Hillary

Hillary was a first-term student whose interdisciplinary degree plan blended art and health science. She was both a practicing artist and “body worker.” In our first meetings, she seemed almost reticent, and spoke haltingly in a quiet voice only after prodding. Her nervousness was apparent, her demeanor fearful and timid. She began the activities for the study with this same timidity, often e-mailing to be sure she understood an assignment before she proceeded. Although she was looking forward to working on a final creative project and welcomed the fieldwork in natural science, she expressed great fears of the first creative writing assignment, saying that she wasn't a “good” writer and didn't like writing. During the study, she continually worried over her choices for the final projects. Her apparent attitude was surprising considering her interdisciplinary background and interests, but not entirely unusual for an adult student returning to academe after a long break.

Hillary came in to meet about the first set of assignments, which involved reading and writing creative work about the natural world. She related best to the work of Annie Dillard and was able to express her appreciation of Dillard's close relationship with Tinker Creek, and said that she felt



Figure 8: Hillary's experiment with photography

close to her special place because she walked there everyday. She also enjoyed the poetry but said that she had never written any creative material and was worried about the assignment. As we talked more about her relationship with the place and what she had observed over time, she became more enthusiastic and expressive. When she came to the next meeting, her demeanor was markedly different, her appearance more polished, and she was smiling. She was eager to share her creative writing and the first poems she had ever written, poems about her place:

Red-winged Blackbird calls
From cedar swamp
Jubilee! Jubilee!
Spring is here

The exuberance of this poem was reflected in Hillary's disposition and in marked contrast to the way she had approached the assignments at the beginning of her study. She explains how this new confidence came about in the prose portions of her creative writing:

There are times when I am out in nature that transformative happenings take place ... These encounters with nature have an ability to spark the imagination, bring forth childhood memories, and stir the subconscious ...

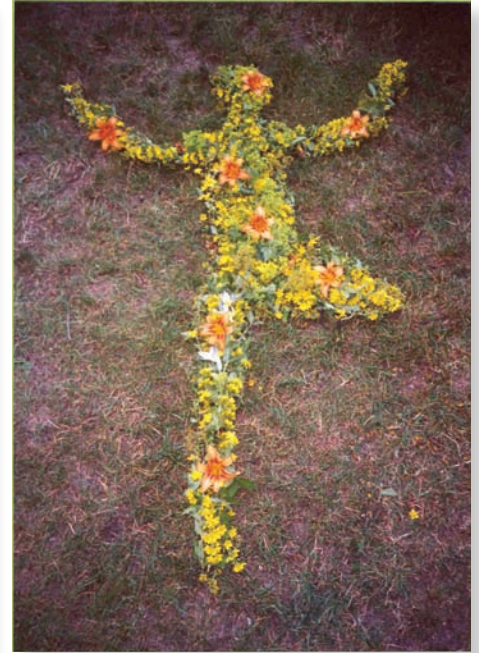


Figure 9: Hillary's self-portrait

[I am] grateful to recall the joy it can place in the heart of a child ... [the] gift of heightened awareness of the beauty that surrounds us every day and of nature's capacity to deeply touch all who allow her to enter.

Hillary's self confidence over the course of her study also is expressed in her final creative project, a series of carefully presented photographs inspired by the work of Andy Goldsworthy. The first photograph is a form of self-portrait, her shape outlined at the start of her walking path, filled with flowers from her mother's garden. It should be noted that this was Hillary's first experience with art photography, and she experimented with both 35mm and digital cameras to achieve the results. Because she was able to work in the familiar territories of art and natural science during one of her first studies at Empire State College, Hillary gained confidence in herself as a student crossing into the academy. She also was able to venture into new artistic media, breakthrough into creative writing and improve her college writing skills.

For Hillary, the opportunity to combine her interest in the natural sciences and the arts in an interdisciplinary study of a “safe” place, eased her crossing into the academy. For Kiera and Larry, the opportunity to

practice in the familiar territories of their disciplinary areas offered a safe crossing into a less familiar territory, one that seemed foreign and perhaps frightening at the start. Because the study encouraged students to investigate places within their local environments they also were encouraged to make stronger connections with, and have greater awareness of, not only their local environments, but also the more

global environmental issues associated with them. The students' personal connections with the places chosen for their natural science fieldwork also made a safe place for exploring creative practices not previously undertaken. In addition, the multimedia assignments associated with both the arts and sciences allowed for demonstration of knowledge and understanding through a variety of formats, thus drawing upon the

individual strengths of each student. Finally, the interdisciplinary framing of the study allowed students to start from a point of knowledge and discipline in which they had previous learning and practice, and not only to gain the confidence to explore a new, unknown territory, but also to learn to see connections between the disciplines that they had not previously contemplated.

Collaging?

A few months back I came home to a message on our answering machine: "Turn to page 111 in *The Great Gatsby*." I knew the voice of Mary Folliet, careful reader and, for many years, important aid to *All About Mentoring*. So I dutifully found the Fitzgerald text and read the conversation between Nick and Gatsby that took place just after Daisy had said good night to Nick:

"I wouldn't ask too much of her," I ventured. "You can't repeat the past."

"Can't repeat the past?" he cried incredulously. "Why of course you can."

He looked around him wildly, as if the past were lurking there in the shadow of his house, just out of reach of his hand.

"I'm going to fix everything just the way it was before," he said, nodding determinedly. "She'll see."

(Fitzgerald, F. Scott [1953], *The Great Gatsby*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 111)

And then, of course, there was the connection: I had included the following quote to open the editorial in the last issue of *All About Mentoring* (#29):

"She said you can't repeat the past, I said you can't? What do you mean you can't? Of course you can." Bob Dylan, "Summer Days" (2001)

Mr. Dylan, it seems, knows his Fitzgerald (as, of course, does Ms. Folliet). Plagiarism or the fine art of collaging? The possibilities are, as Mary might put it, "uniquely vast."

Management Theories and Leadership Roles: A Deeper Look at the Competing Values Framework

Alan T. Belasen, Center for Graduate Programs

Note: Alan Belasen, the 2004 recipient of the Susan H. Turben Award for Excellence in Scholarship, delivered this talk at the All College Conference in March 2005.

I have devoted the years 1995 - 2005 (see references) to studying organization development and management education using the Competing Values Framework (C.V.F.). Some of this research also has included collaborative efforts with Empire State College faculty. The development of FORUM competency-based management curriculum and later the design of the competency-based M.B.A. also benefited from this research. The first part of this paper lays the foundation for describing the tension that exists in the literature and which eventually led to the development of the C.V.F. I will then discuss the tenets of the C.V.F., which views organizations as inherently contradictory systems



Alan Belasen

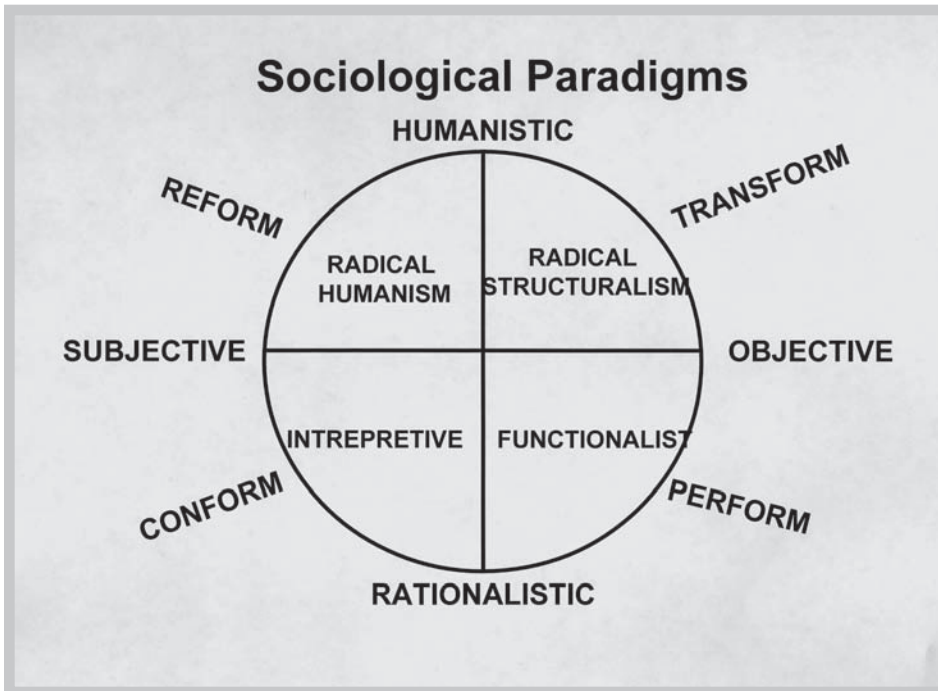
with managers facing the need to deal with paradoxes. The C.V.F. offers an inventory of universal, complementary roles that managers can play. The model is often used diagnostically to help managers negate a possible drift towards extreme behaviors in which strength becomes a weakness. Next, the discussion will focus on the research project that Empire State College colleague Nancy Frank and I conducted. We had two research objectives: First, to validate the configuration of the C.V.F. and, second, to identify the causal paths from traits to mindsets to leadership roles. I will be moving back and forth between theory and practice. Unlike physical science theories, theories in the social sciences tend to be self-fulfilling. Management theory, if it gains sufficient currency, changes the behaviors of managers who start acting in accordance with the theory (Goshal, S. *Learning and Education*, 2005). Whether sensible or not, managers as the subjects and consumers of management theories, adapt their behaviors to conform to the doctrine du jour. You will see evidence of this throughout the paper.

For much of the past half-century, management philosophy has coalesced around two broad schools of thought: A rationalistic school based on the principles of scientific management and the theory of bureaucratic control, and a humanistic school based on the view of organizations as interactive systems evolving around the socio-psychological needs of organizational members. This dichotomy has prevailed throughout the evolution of organization and management theory and only recently has given rise to new integrative approaches to managerial leadership.

Slide 7

The rationalistic approach reflects two important paradigms described in Morgan and Burrell's seminal work, *Sociological Paradigms and Organizational Analysis (1979)*: Functionalist – the belief that social structures have discernible purposes, or functions, that are reflected through and contain human action; and interpretive – the belief that human constructs ultimately reside in and are manifestations of human thought. In management theory, the functionalist paradigm draws on the principles of scientific management and economic models of rationality. The interpretive paradigm has its roots in the behavioral models of bounded rationality and in the notion that uncertainty and limited time to deal with complex issues give rise to implicit and explicit decision-rules. Structures and processes can be expressed as the results of codified rules, which at the same time constrain and facilitate actions while also symbolizing organizational commitments.

The rationalistic approach was positioned by management and organization theory as an efficiency-driven, control-oriented ideology with a strong emphasis on the centralization of decision making and clear roles and responsibilities. Max Weber epitomized this approach by postulating that bureaucracies are organized according to rational principles. The strict hierarchy and unchallenged authority are aimed at achieving compliance and facilitating administrative change. Leaders in these organizations are viewed as the naysayers, monitors and evaluators, trading disciplined behavior and good performance for rewards. Ultimately the goal of such an organization is to promote the stability, accountability and legitimacy of organizational actions. In *Images of Organizations (1988)*, Gareth Morgan likened this organization to a “psychic prison.” Of course, “prison” has negative



Slide 7

connotations implying constraints on behaviors that are seen to be wrong in some way: constraints that should not be in place. An organization that functions according to this metaphor will “trap” its members into a uniform way of thinking and acting.

During the late 1960s, under the pretense of social and economic change, managers increasingly confronted problems that bureaucratic systems seemed ill suited to handle. It was in this context that a discourse on organizational culture and employee commitment began to attract the attention of both management consultants and organizational researchers. The common view was that an altered approach was needed to help managers create adaptive, more effective systems. Surprisingly, however, the rationalistic approach continued to dominate the thinking and practice of organizational leaders. A good example is Warren Bennis’s prediction in the late 1960s that the bureaucracy would die because of its inattention to human concerns and its incapacity for change. In a candid admission of second thoughts published in *American Psychologist* (1970), Bennis stated that his earlier views were naïve with respect to the power and durability of the bureaucratic form. His experience as a top-level university administrator led him to

appreciate the factors that will not change as well as those that will.

During the 1970s much of the success of modern organizations was credited to their ability to inscribe the lessons of experience in codified rule structures. The neo-Weberian movement portrayed modern, complex organizations as rule-driven systems. Rules increase efficiency by reducing uncertainty and by connecting individual action to collective outcomes. Compliance is achieved by employees’ self-policing, assimilation, and through clear and unambiguous communication. Message fidelity – the degree to which a message received is the same as the message sent – is the standard by which communication effectiveness is evaluated. There is no place for ambiguity, contradiction or paradox within the bureaucratic organization because it would confuse the well-ordered structure.

The humanistic approach has distanced itself from the rationalistic view by challenging existing economic or ideological constraints upon human action and freedom. Morgan and Burrell’s two paradigms, “radical humanism” and “radical structuralism,” reflect this approach. Radical humanism focuses on consciousness, viewing human ideas as being imprisoned within ideological

processes dominated by powerful actors. Here the potential for change is seen as dependent upon making organizational members aware of patterns of dominance. Radical structuralism, on the other hand, is grounded in the antagonisms between structural relations, not consciousness. Reality is not changed by the consciousness of people, but by the binding together of these contradictions that transform existing social systems into new forms.

Communication in the humanistic approach is viewed as the key mechanism through which structure is created. Communication not only allows the parts of the organization to run smoothly, it also is the force that creates, maintains, and sustains the organization. According to Weick (*Sensemaking in Organizations*, 1995), the role of the leader in this view also is altered from that of a monitor, who keeps track of what’s going on, to one of an evangelist, who articulates the vision. Message fidelity is no longer the only standard for evaluating the effectiveness and appropriateness of communication. As a result, the possibility exists for appropriate and effective communication to be ambiguous, contradictory and paradoxical.

The philosophy behind the humanistic

What is so interesting is that the traditionally hierarchical (and even militaristic) structure of NASA had to break into teams of practice in order to solve life and death problems.

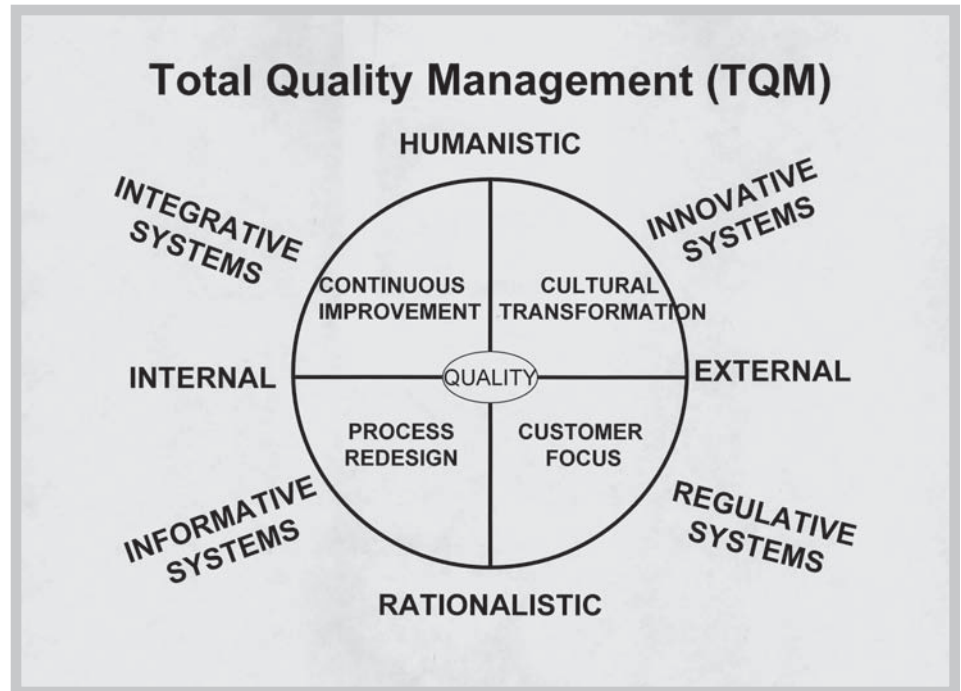
approach was that free from the burden of being over controlled, with more autonomy and discretion over the outcomes of work, employees would synergize their efforts and perform with excellence. Participative management and pushing decision making down to lower levels appeared to have helped many companies to become

innovative and flexible, transform cultures, use cross-functional teams, do well in environments of change, and even deal with crisis situations. Apollo 13 is an excellent example of how teams function within a professional bureaucracy that adapted the humanistic approach in running its huge projects. What is so interesting is that the traditionally hierarchical (and even militaristic) structure of NASA had to break into teams of practice in order to solve life and death problems. The matrix design that brings together functional expertise and innovative thinking under one cover has helped NASA become more adaptive and flexible.

With its focus on the value of social capital, the humanistic approach became quite popular during the 1970s and the 1980s. Many mid-level managers and corporate executives began to participate in training and development programs designed to enhance their social-awareness and improve interpersonal skills. During that time, Total Quality Management (T.Q.M.) pioneers such as Juran, Deming, Crosby and Peters claimed that Japan's industrial success is attributed to the Japanese ideology, which centers on the value of human resources, employee loyalty, open communication and joint decision making. They suggested that American firms would do well to emulate the Japanese success story by emphasizing and developing strong cultures that foster concern for quality, flexibility and customer satisfaction. Deming's appearance on NBC in the summer of 1980 highlighted this necessity: "If Japan can, why can't we?"

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By the early 1980s, the notions of culture and commitment appeared to gain a stronghold in many organizations. Managers initiated change programs aimed at rethinking the way organizations are structured, work is conducted, and people are managed and rewarded. Organizations began to take on a whole new look. Accountability was outward – to customers, with managers being responsive to the needs of employees. Quality was the first among equals of the organization's functions. The role of the leader became that of facilitator, catalyst and coach. Articulating the T.Q.M. view into the mission and strategy of the



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organization has led many organizations to adopt the inverted pyramid structure with customers on top and managers at the bottom.

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As organizations increasingly spent millions of dollars on training and development programs in support of the quality vision, a puzzling pattern emerged: there were as many ways to implement T.Q.M. as there were companies adopting it. Positioning itself on the shaky ground between the humanistic and the rationalist paradigms, T.Q.M. quickly became the target for criticisms from both sides.

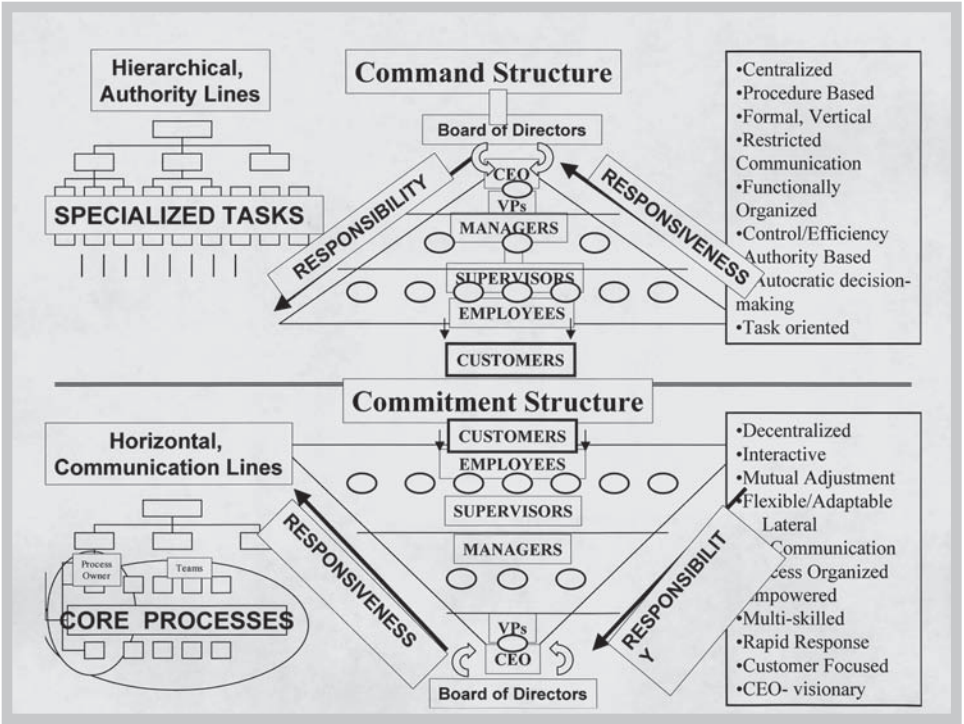
By the mid 1980s the consensus among theorists was that the intellectual boundaries of management theory were still ambiguous with multiple models and inconsistent views of organization and management. Authors have conceptualized organizations as networks of objects, coalitions of powerful constituencies, meaning-producing systems, information-processing units, open systems and even garbage cans. Each of these models highlighted or even uncovered, organizational and managerial artifacts that were missed or ignored by the others. Research conducted under these different conceptualizations focused on

different phenomena, proposed different relationships among variables, and judged the effectiveness of organization and management differently. Unfortunately, no workable classification scheme resulted from either of these conventions and no clear conception of organization and management was produced. Although some theorists have argued in favor of variety, most theories were developed as mutually exclusive theories – as superior alternatives to existing ones.

Around the same time (1983-1986) two SUNY Albany researchers, John Rohrbaugh, a social psychologist by training (humanistic), and Bob Quinn, a management science researcher (rationalistic), joined forces to develop a dialectical materialist approach to bridge the structure-agency divide with promising implications for managerial behavior and leadership roles. They labeled the new theory: Competing Values Framework.

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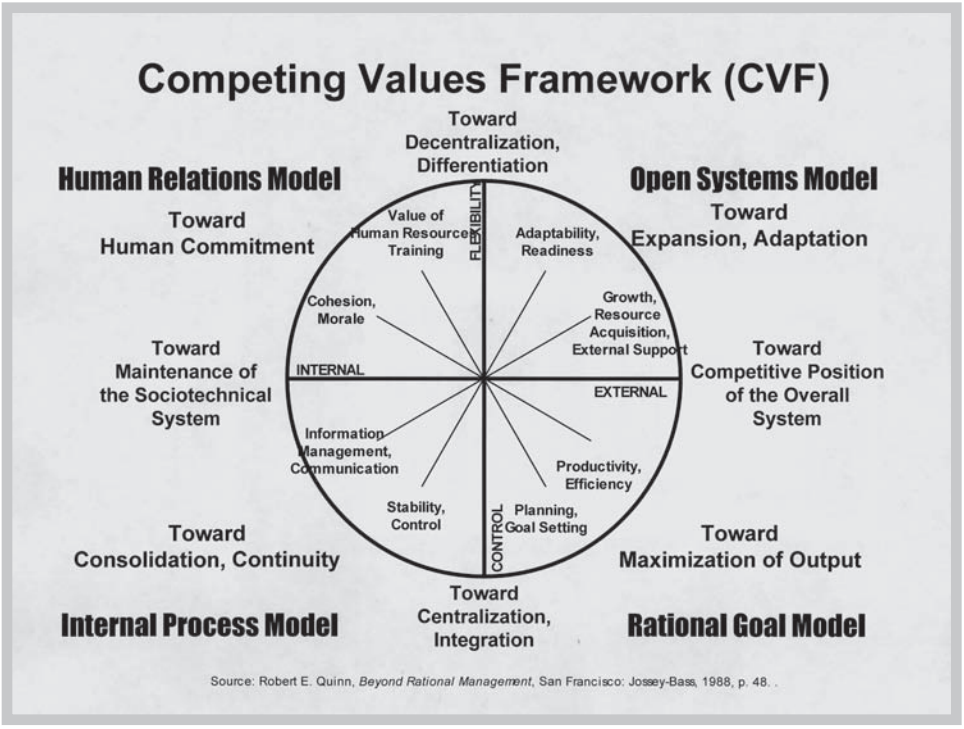
The Competing Values Framework (C.V.F.) juxtaposes the inherent contradictions facing organizations and managers on two axes or dimensions. (1) Vertically, the competing demands of being flexible versus using control to promote organizational



the opposite quadrant, the monitor and coordinator roles are more relevant for system maintenance and integration and require project management and supervision skills. For each role a set of three competencies were identified empirically. The key to successful managerial leadership is balancing the contradictory pressures on the managerial job by acquiring the competencies needed to perform the diverse set of roles.

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Effective managers are perceived as displaying the eight C.V.F. roles more often than less effective managers. Gender differences did not change this conclusion: Men and women are regarded as equally competent (or incompetent) managers when assessed objectively by others in terms of how well they display the C.V.F. roles. The framework allows managers to identify their relative strengths and weaknesses through self-assessment, or to measure their perceptions about how well they perform the roles against the perceptions of others, and take steps to remedy their deficiencies. Balancing the role behaviors across the C.V.F. quadrants is key. Studies showed that when managers overemphasize one set of values (or play certain roles extensively without considering the other roles) they drift towards the negative zone. Consequently, the organization might become dysfunctional. In his book, *Beyond Rational Management* (1988), Bob Quinn suggested that acquiring behavioral complexity could help managers avoid the consequences of the negative zone. Behavioral complexity involves (1) a conclusive command of the repertoire of leadership roles and (2) the ability to vary the emphasis on each of the roles depending on the nature of the situation.



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outcomes; and, (2) Horizontally, the competing demands of following the needs of employees. While the bottom part of the C.V.F. reflects the rationalistic approach, the top part reflects the humanistic approach. And while the right side of the framework calls attention to external affairs, the left side focuses on internal dynamics. These

two dimensions produce four quadrants. Each quadrant, in turn, is paired with two leadership roles that are complementary, but those in the opposite quadrant are seen as competing or contradictory roles. For example, the innovator and broker roles rely on creativity and communication skills to stimulate change and development. In

While there is considerable agreement about the overall value of the C.V.F., new studies about the configuration and dimensions of the model have shown that the C.V.F. needs to be retested at two levels of analysis:

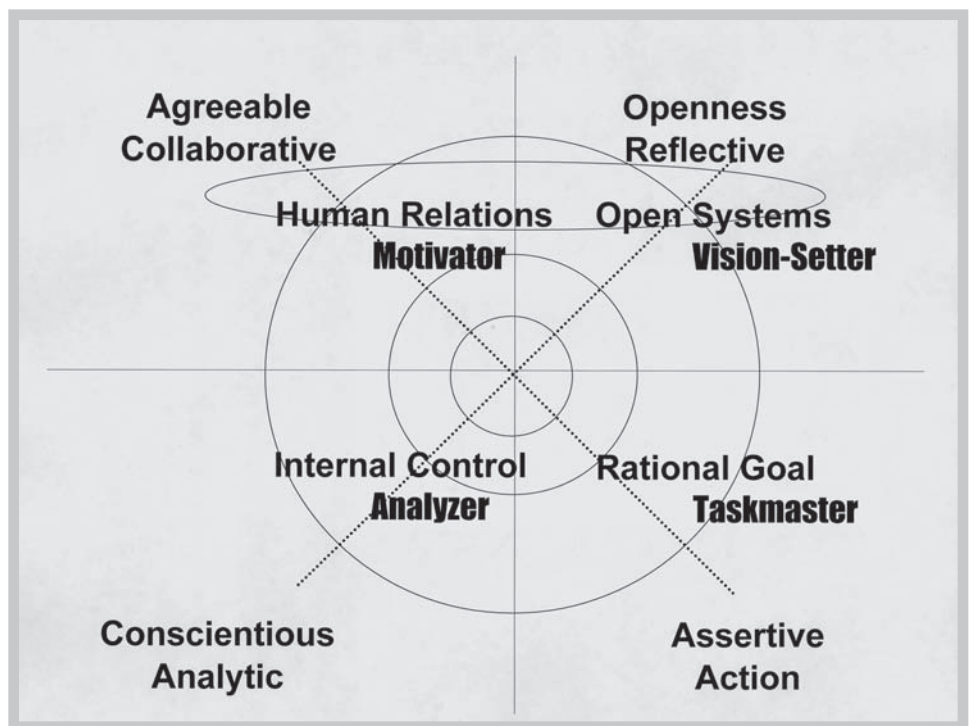
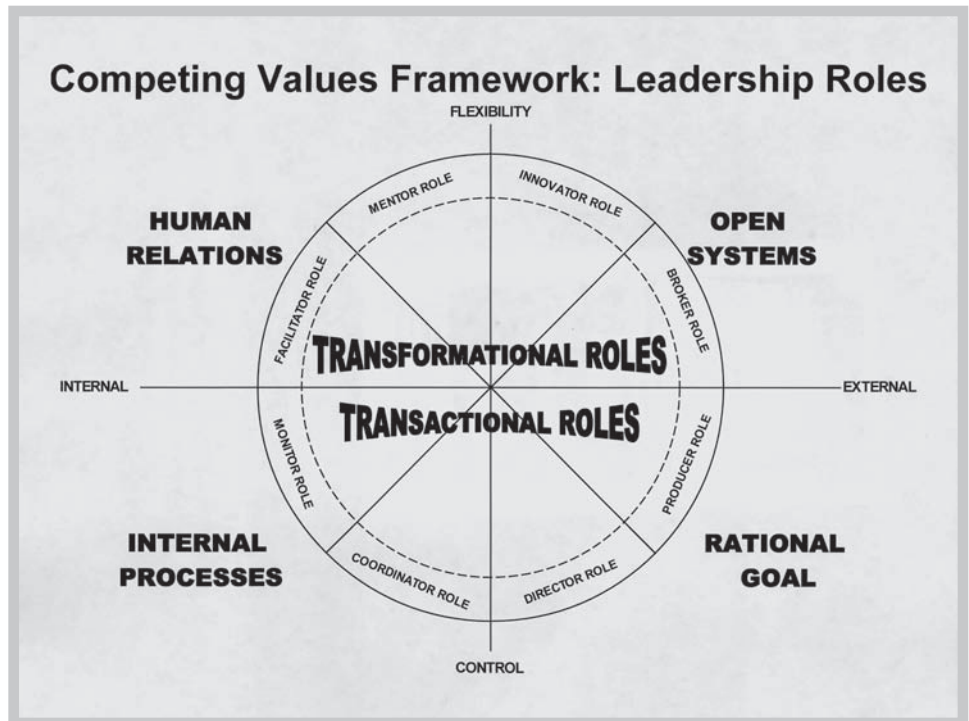
- (1) **Inter-quadrant** – To validate the placement of opposing quadrants and the order of the roles within them.
- (2) **Intra-quadrant** – To trace causal paths between traits, mindsets and roles within

each quadrant based on the assumption that weaker or stronger traits ultimately result in weaker or stronger roles.

Mindsets are inherent attitudes, or frames of mind, with which managers interpret and cope with their environments. Since information about leaders is typically stored in memory in trait form, particularly when complex interactions are involved, could we reach the same conclusion about leadership effectiveness by looking at traits and mindsets? Would it be possible to assume that traits determine the kind of mindsets that push managers to choose certain roles over others? These questions have important implications for selection, education and development of managers as well as for leadership succession. For example, studies showed that recruiters who rated their environment as high on control prefer conscientiousness more for their managers than do recruiters who rated their environment as low on control.

Methods and Results

A representative sample of mid- to upper-level managers was selected from a pool of nearly 300 managers. Respondents generally represented higher levels of management within their organizations, with 39 percent reporting to the CEO, president or vice president. Over half of the respondents represented large organizations, with 40 percent from organizations with 1,000 to 10,000 employees. Finally, respondents represented a wide range of experience, with at least 25 percent of the group in their current position for between three and six years. We drew items from C.V.F., mindsets and personality models to develop the method for data collection. These models, in the past, have been tested independently, but they were never connected or aligned. The basic assumptions underlying the C.V.F. are quite similar to the basic assumptions underlying the Big Five in personality theory. For our study, an adaptation of the four stable personality traits was used. These traits can be overlaid to substitute for the C.V.F. quadrants. A similar pattern appears with regard to the managerial mindsets. When overlaid, the managerial mindsets complement the C.V.F. quadrants.



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The primary instrument consisted of 60 items. We also added a category with items measuring each manager's self-perceptions of effectiveness in each of the quadrant classifications. An earlier pilot study helped fine-tune the instrument that we designed

and Cronbach's alpha reliability test supported its suitability for constructing scales for additional analyses. We used a technique called Multi-Dimensional Scaling (M.D.S.) to test the alignment between the eight C.V.F. roles and the C.V.F. quadrants and create a visual image of their relationships. We then used an additional

statistical method to examine the causal relationships between traits, mindsets and roles. Multi-Dimensional Scaling results remained problematic until the broker, monitor and director items were removed. The opposite quadrants were then aligned as the original theory predicted. The compressed C.V.F. also validated earlier assumptions about re-ordering and aligning the roles so that each quadrant houses a distinct role. Next, our analysis confirmed the causal relationships between traits and mindsets. Findings also confirmed causal paths from traits and mindsets to the C.V.F. latent variables. We then turned to ask whether these sets of variables still relate in the theoretical C.V.F. quadrant arrangement. According to M.D.S. analyses, each set of separate clusters fell into the predicted spatial alignment. Finally, all three variables – traits, mindsets and roles – were included in the path predicting effectiveness.

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Implications

A primary advantage of our consolidated model is that it addresses the problem of dealing with competing demands on cognitive resources, demands that frequently are exacerbated by stressful

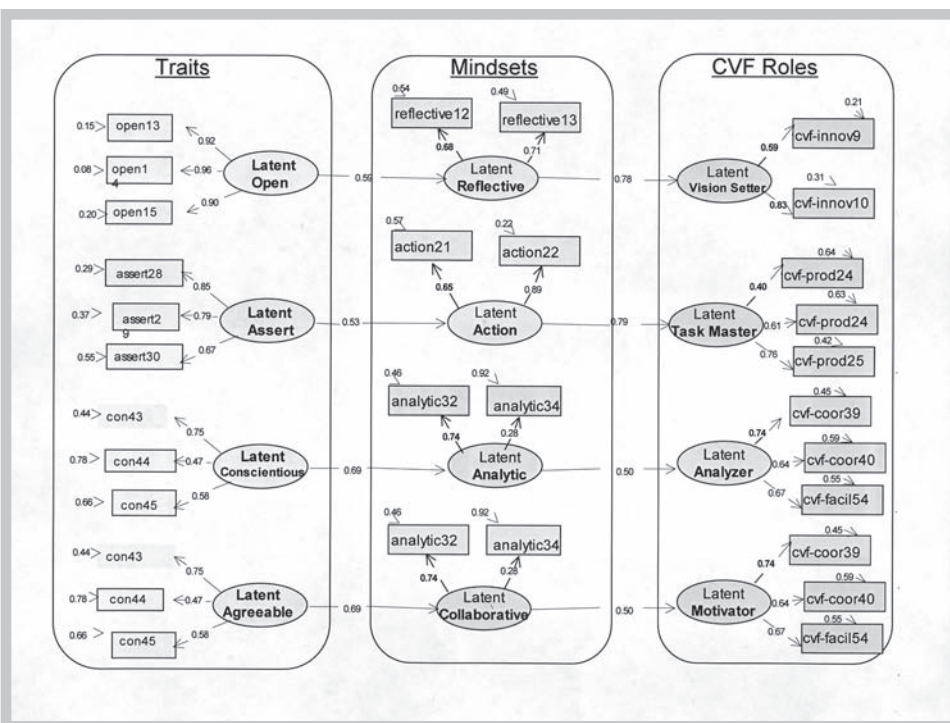
work environments. Fiedler, for example, used Cognitive Resource Theory (C.R.T.) to propose that managers would depend on experience and intuition to match their behaviors to high stress situations and draw more on intelligence in low stress situations. Routine, low stress situations, allow for intellectualization, reflection and the development of tactics based on theories and training. High stress situations would trigger a fall back on the most dominant response pattern in which experience and intuition play a key role in choosing the behaviors to deal with the situation.

In a field study covering organizational transitions that I did with Michael Fortunato and Meg Benke (*Journal of Human Resource Management*, 1996) several years ago, we found that during downsizing managers tended to push their leadership roles to the extreme of hyper effectiveness. Operating under high stress and working hard to demonstrate their value, these managers seemed to abandon the requirement for balance and adopt a managerial leadership profile that is more consistent with the new conditions. In a follow-up study I did with Nancy Frank (*International Journal of Human Resource Development and Management*, 2004), we found empirical support for the argument

that without much help from human resource systems, hyper-effective behavior is both risky and unsustainable.

Both C.V.F. and C.R.T., however, are needed to address the choice of managerial behaviors under different organizational contexts. We suggest that conscious choice of managerial leadership roles is more likely to take place in routine/stable environments. In highly volatile work environments, however, choices will be affected by the repertoire of wide-ranging experiences and instinctive, often automated, behavioral responses. Since traits and mindsets precede roles, we can argue that diminishing cognitive resources could also result in retreating back down the causal path from intentional role behaviors to more fundamental reaction patterns. One conclusion is that management development approaches should target specific weaknesses and their psychological underpinnings, beyond the typical “shotgun” approach of offering the same leadership training to all managers. Genuine growth and long-term gains in role strength will take place only by concentrating on specific skill growth from an intensely individualized perspective.

This conclusion has some relevance for how management education and business programs are designed and taught. While most business programs follow the rationalistic approach – teaching students analytical techniques for specific business functions such as finance, operations and marketing – management is not really a science but rather a practice. The practice of management is fundamentally “soft,” which is why we commonly apply labels such as experience, intuition, judgment and wisdom to it. It is the exercise of leadership roles in specific situations. This also raises the question of whether or not business and management programs are assessing the right managerial skills. Empirical studies have shown that while key managerial leadership processes favor intuition over analysis, current assessment methods and evaluation criteria are biased towards analytical skills and abilities. Key managerial leadership processes are enormously complex. They seem to be more relational and holistic than ordered and sequential, more intuitive than intellectual. As proposed



Last slide

in the two papers I did with Michael Fortunato (see references), the balance between soft and hard skills must be well preserved. Management education programs become both relevant and accountable when they integrate cognitive and behavioral methods of learning that treat thinking and doing, abstracting and applying as mutually enhancing learning processes.

A deeper look at the C.V.F. reveals intricacies and nuances that are not easily captured by a novice observer. The C.V.F. is based on implicit metaphors that are paradoxical in nature: these metaphors or cognitive maps are vital to understanding and highlighting certain aspects of organizations; at the same time they limit our understanding by ignoring or excluding other aspects. While integrating rationalistic and humanistic theories has led to breakthrough thinking about organization-agent relationships and provided an explanation for why managers choose to play certain roles, the C.V.F. metaphor also has restricted the boundaries of our understanding of how the choice of certain roles is made. While the results of the current research generally support the construct space and dimensions of the C.V.F., they also raise important questions about the causal effects of personality traits, mindsets and situational factors on the choice of leadership roles and how key managerial leadership processes are learned and evaluated. These questions can best be answered empirically via more correlational studies.

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Mentoring – Then and Now (Cont.)*

An Interview with Bob Hassenger

Margaret Clark-Plaskie, Genesee Valley Center

Robert Hassenger received a B.A. in philosophy from Notre Dame in 1959, and a Ph.D. from the Committee on Human Development, University of Chicago, in 1965. He returned to Notre Dame as an assistant professor of sociology from 1965 to 1971, served a year as visiting associate professor at Western Michigan University and Kalamazoo College, 1971 - 72, and joined the Genesee Valley Center as mentor/associate professor in 1972. In 1974, he became the first associate dean of the Niagara Frontier Center, and then acting dean. Bob moved to Saratoga Springs as special assistant to the academic vice president in 1977 and was one of the four founding faculty of the Center for Distance Learning (CDL). After more than 32 years at Empire State College, Bob retired from his position as coordinator of social sciences at CDL at the end of 2003. He continues to serve as a part-time mentor and professor emeritus. This interview was done on May 21, 2004.



Bob Hassenger, Buffalo, 1975/6

Margaret: I thought we might start out by talking about your education.

Bob: Actually, when I started graduate school at Chicago, I was, for one semester, in political science because I was very caught up in that whole politics of ideals and the Kennedy candidacy. But I realized political science wasn't quite that glamorous and switched to the Committee on Human Development, which cut across psychology, sociology, anthropology and education. It had fairly few requirements – after the first year, you could put together pretty much what you wanted to do. At that time, I was teaching at a Catholic woman's college in Chicago, Mundelein (now part of Loyola University); they were doing a self-study for Middle States reaccreditation. I ended up codirecting that process. I saw something

interesting in the data we were gathering, out of which emerged my dissertation.

Margaret: It certainly was a period of great change.

Bob: There were huge changes going on in the Catholic Church. There was the Second Vatican Council that had started in '62. They turned the altar around and started saying the liturgy in the vernacular. So many things that I grew up with were being rethought. It was really a great time. And there were all the changes in the larger society, with the civil rights movement, the women's movement, the new music, art – so much was changing.

Margaret: What kind of initial teaching position did you want?

Bob: I very much wanted to go back to Notre Dame and, oddly enough, they had just started a Psychology Department, after burying it in philosophy for years. But after resisting it for all those years, what they wanted, certainly compared to Chicago, was incredibly empirical. I didn't like what they were doing. So I went there in sociology and the dissertation turned into a book in 1967, *The Shape of Catholic Higher Education*, published by The University of Chicago Press. There was so much going on in Catholic higher education that the book got a lot of attention. I was quoted in *Newsweek* and *The Times*, I was on one of those Sunday morning shows, on national panels, and on the Academic Commission of the American Council of Higher Education (ACE), which is how I came to know John Jacobson and Morris Keeton (CAEL). It was kind of a heady time for me. But I think I started taking it all too seriously. I was 28!

Margaret: When did you learn about Empire State College?

Bob: In 1972, one of the people I had met at one of those ACE Academic Commission meetings was John Jacobson, who at the time was at a place called Florida Presbyterian College, which has since become Eckerd College. He was the first associate dean at Empire State College – although he never served in that position: between the time he was hired and the time he got to the Genesee Valley Center (GVC), Rochester, they asked him to be dean. As was so often the case in the early days at Empire State College, there was a kind of creative competition, partly because people, like the folks in the SUNY chancellor's office, and people here at the college, weren't sure what they wanted. The "director" of the Genesee Valley Center didn't work out, and left the college. John

became dean. In Saratoga, there were four people who thought they were going to become president of Empire State College – one of them was Jim Hall, then a relatively obscure assistant vice chancellor in SUNY Central. (I talked about this in my 1995 faculty lecture, [published in *All About Mentoring* in the spring, 1995 issue.]) The other three were Arthur Chickering, Loren Baritz and Bill Dodge – and I think each believed at one time that he was going to be the president.

Margaret: And, of course, Jim Hall became our first president.

Bob: I think it was a very shrewd choice by the late Ernest Boyer. Here was this wacky college giving credit for prior learning and not having classrooms and not having bricks and mortar and doing some stuff at a distance. Jim Hall was so straight like a boy scout! I think with people like Baritz or Chickering, we would have been more suspect (not that each hasn't gone on to distinguished careers elsewhere). But they kept these other people around. So Jim was always trying to keep peace between the factions. Baritz wanted to produce high-quality packaged "modules" to be used throughout SUNY. Chickering saw the faculty more as guides or advisors – models for students who would design their own curricula. Jim Hall was like FDR. He tried something to see if it worked and if it didn't, he'd move on to something else. And half the people at Empire State College now think that Jim Hall must be a building, probably an athletic facility.

Margaret: And what attracted you to the college?

Bob: I had published a great deal on Catholic higher education and on church-related higher education generally, so I had tilled a little corner of the garden a lot and thought, this is crazy. I don't want to spend the rest of my life cultivating this little corner. So John Jacobson asked me to come and look at Rochester, and I had seen the positions in the *Chronicle*, and I thought this might be a subject for some research. But my private thoughts were something like: "These are probably a bunch of touchy-feely types, losers who can't make it in 'real' academe; they can't do research; they can't get tenure at a real university.

Here's an institution that probably wants to save souls." Not that different from church-sponsored higher education, I thought.

Margaret: And when you visited the college, your response was what?

Bob: I was actually impressed. Here were people with Ph.D.s from Harvard and Chicago and from Yale, and they had done things in traditional colleges and universities. These were people who had decided that there's a better way to do higher education. People turned out to be good scholars who knew that they did not want to stay in that narrow area. What they were fleeing was a kind of academicism. The *last* thing they wanted was a kind of top-down model – like the model of creating what we called "modules." Incidentally, I think that legacy ending up hurting CDL years later. Some people thought that we were bringing back that model of prepackaged materials to the college.

Margaret: Soon after, you became acting dean in Buffalo.

Bob: What happened was that I was their first associate dean when they opened in 1974 and became acting dean when the current dean was found to have cancer. But some people in the college had a different idea of what a dean ought to look like, I guess. So in 1977, Ron Corwin, who was then executive vice president, a position we no longer have here, made me an offer I couldn't refuse – something they called special assistant to the academic vice president, based here in Saratoga Springs. About that time, Jim Hall had gone over to the British Open University (BOU) and was intrigued by what he saw, and the college decided that it would adapt some of the BOU courses for our students. So the late Vincent Worth from the BOU and I spent a year trying to do this. And, around the same time, I started producing courses that made sense to me – courses like Family and Society.

Margaret: So this was the beginning of the Center for Distance Learning. Was there any opposition to this?

Bob: A lot of opposition. Resources were coming here and could have been going elsewhere, and, as I mentioned earlier, the whole idea of modules and packaged

courses, of things off the shelf, seemed so anathema to everything Empire State College stood for. But we had some good people – Rich Bonnabeau, Suzanne Graver (now at Williams), and George Bragle – the four of us worked in a little place that is now apartments, in back of 28 Union Avenue: 104 Regent Street. It had been someone's stable! And then we moved into 28 Union Avenue and then to Two and then Three Union Avenue, and now to 111 West Avenue.

Margaret: Was the center self-standing?

Bob: Chip Johnstone, who was dean of what was then called the Center for Statewide Programs, ended up overseeing CDL. He tried very hard to integrate us into his center, which was really a collection of units. It never worked. The Center for Distance Learning was trying to do its own thing. We had 100, 200, 300 students. And we started to look more threatening to the college because more resources started coming to us. But in the early '80s, the major change occurred with the computer revolution. Suddenly, distance learning could incorporate a whole different dimension. The possibility of asynchronous learning probably made CDL. And it helped to convert some of the skeptics. You could really have more presence with your students if you were active online than you could in a center. When I was in a center, if I could see a student every two weeks for an hour, that was pretty good. And some of the students came a long way for that meeting, and some mentors didn't see their students that much either.

Margaret: But at that time, it must have been more e-mail than what we think of now as asynchronous learning.

Bob: When I was first doing this so-called "distance" work, it was print and then phone. But it was really very awkward: "Well, what did you think of the book?" "I liked it" It was just polling. Fishing, maybe. Anyhow, I wasn't very good at it. And I would get behind and if I called a student at the wrong time or missed him or she missed me, then there would be other problems. And some students just wanted to be left alone.

Margaret: Do you think that students are more “active” in the forms that we now have?

Bob: The computer really only makes things possible. Probably only about half the students at most are *really* active in a distance learning course. In mine, at least. And then there are what some people claim are the side issues that come up in the online discussions. But they’re interesting – like the online back and forth that happens on the topic of gay marriage in a course on social change.

Margaret: What other changes do you see as you reflect back to the mid-’80s?

Bob: For one, in terms of our students, there are far more women than men; it was not always that way. When I joined the college, it was about 60 - 40 male to female. Now it’s more than flipped around. (Of course, it has on traditional campuses, too.) And in terms of faculty, women were always more highly represented in the college than they were in most traditional colleges, but nothing like they are now – I think they are probably more than half the faculty. I think that in the early years of the Genesee Valley Center, we had three women out of 14. But in other places of the college there were always strong female voices. Women around the state were important founding people in the college.

Margaret: I want to get back to the tensions that you mentioned about what the college would be like.

Bob: Yes. From the beginning there were tensions between the kind of Baritz model of intellectual rigor and the Chickering model of mentoring, emphasizing affective as well as intellectual growth. And there was a lot of discussion early on about whether to call the faculty mentors or advisors or something else. And Jim Hall was always trying to moderate that discussion.

Margaret: How do you think about mentoring? Is there something distinctive about this model?

Bob: I think it’s probably about the same dynamic that works with students at any level, whether in an elementary school or in graduate school. I think it’s a kind of bond, a kind of psychic connection. It is harder online, but one also can be more free

online than sometimes one can be across the desk. It works with some and it doesn’t work with others. For students who want to be taken seriously as learners or who have the experience of being taken seriously by someone for the first time in their lives, there’s almost a kind of transference or a kind of identification that takes place. It’s not psychotherapy: I don’t want to reduce it to that. But there is a process of identification that can take place. It’s an important connection that can happen for some students, and it can happen in a distance learning course as much as in a face-to-face study with a student.

Margaret: So you think that students are looking for these kinds of connections with the faculty?

Bob: I don’t know. I don’t think students are looking for a nice guy. They’re looking for competence, faculty who can do their job. I think most students like it when you can manifest a kind of assurance about your positions on some things. So I’ve never quite understood this dynamic of mentoring or how you can teach it. I assume people try to show others or model what mentoring is like. But I don’t really know how much that matters. Even if you look at a tape of someone working with a student, like the tapes that some people, like Xenia Coulter, Lee Herman and others made, I’m not sure what you learn from those things. It’s not at all clear to me.

Margaret: And how about in your role as area coordinator at CDL? Did that work matter?

Bob: Over the years, a few people have come to me and have said: “You seem to have this job figured out. Why don’t you mentor other people?” And I’d always try to beg off by saying something like: “I’m not sure if my style would work for someone else.” And the rational reason I would give to that was that I started with a handful of tutors and designed my own courses. I had a pretty good sense of what it would mean to develop courses that are intellectually honest and still relevant – courses like Family and Society or Aging and Society. But teaching styles are so different. People can ask me how I do this or that. I can tell them how I do it, but that’s all I can say. I wouldn’t want to claim more than that.

Margaret: You must have been doing something right. I can remember how many tutors attended your retirement celebration and how long they had been tutoring those courses and working with you.

Bob: You try to hire people who seem solid. And then let them alone. I think we micro-manage far too much. And I think I said that before. I only have a few things to say, and so I keep saying them, I guess.

Margaret: Can we get back to the question of the technologies and the changes that have altered our work with students at CDL and around the college?

Bob: I think the Internet has not only changed our lives in terms of e-mail – it certainly hasn’t cut down on our workload – but drastically altered the quickness of response to someone you don’t see that often. And, I think, the technology has made us closer as a college. Interestingly, there has always been high morale at CDL, I think partly because we felt we were sort of excluded by the rest of the college. There was a sense of “no one really understands us; we’re as much mentors as you are.” Currently (2004), there is much more of a sense of being part of the college. And this is partly because of the computer. Teaching online is really the way you can effectively reach more than a handful of students each term. More people around the whole college recognize that.

Margaret: So you do see a change.

Bob: Some mentors really want to see the body language across the desk. And yet I’ve known people who took that position very strongly 20 years ago and now really love online mentoring. Each of them says it is more labor intensive but it’s more gratifying. My best student last term (2004) was from Prague. We were already six hours apart. It was completely asynchronous. But I was reading his papers as though he were really there with me. And most learning is like that. If you are reading a book that may have been written a couple of years ago, even if it is a “brand new” book, the author is right there for you. Actually, I’ve come to see that there is a kind of purity in online teaching, in that you are only responding to what that person has written, not by the annoying way he has of clicking his pencil on the table or that she has of twirling

her hair. You're just not distracted by the person. The obvious downside of that is that you don't get the cues and body language. And, as in any teaching situation, you often wonder: is anyone learning anything and what are they learning? But the very nature of online learning has pushed us to really attend to what we are doing and what students are writing and responding to. That's also part of its purity.

Margaret: The online environment could be comfortable for some mentors and students and not for others.

Bob: As I mentioned before, I think we have to look at those different learning styles. I don't think online learning is for everyone. But then I also don't think that residential college is for everyone. And most adults who had any college at all some years ago think about how much they wasted then; and they're not just thinking about time partying, but things they didn't do that they would have really liked to have spent more time at because it interested them, but they had four other courses to do and thus never could get to it. I think more flexibility in when things are due makes a major difference. Just look at the competing demands in the lives of our students. School is often a third or fourth priority. And, of course, this is true whether a student is studying face-to-face or in a residency or via an online course. The flexibility makes a great deal of difference to adults.

Margaret: Some worry that there is less flexibility in the college today than there was 30 years ago.

Bob: Well, I think that's probably true. And for some students that's really good. But that is just not the way I want to do it. I was someone in college who always, in fact, had the assignment done 48 hours ahead of time because I just didn't want to deal with the work under that kind of pressure. And yet some of the brightest guys I knew left the papers to the last minute and did them in the shower because they actually turned off the electricity at 11:00 o'clock. They were in the showers all night writing these things and writing very good stuff. I just couldn't work that way. I think it's probably true that if you set deadlines, some people will, in effect, make themselves defer gratification and get it done. But I still don't know what

you've taught them if you can get someone to do that.

Margaret: Over your many years in the college, Bob, you have been a mentor and an administrator. Given the history of the college and the changes in the institution as you have described them, what insights have you gained about administration – more specifically about leadership?

Bob: I've seen a lot of deans come and go. I think that a dean at Empire State College, in whatever center or program, is in the same kind of position that I mentioned earlier regarding the area coordinator. You've got to get the best person you can and then just leave that person alone. I think that the deans who have been most frustrated, and who have been most frustrating for the faculty, have been those who really wanted to micro-manage, who really thought that their responsibility was to make sure everyone was doing his job. And of course, for people who have been here a while, that's offensive.

Margaret: Don't people who come to a place like Empire State College make a choice?

Bob: Yes, and especially those who came in the early days of the college. This often meant leaving behind the traditional academic world and the discipline and the guild-quality of it. And I don't think we realized how much we were burning bridges. We wanted to get out of the narrow confines of the department and all the silliness that goes on in departments on a campus: all the cliques and the wars and the having to choose sides. But some of the administrative choices we have made over the years have been baffling. A lot of strange but also some brilliant choices.

Margaret: We seem to be involved in some difficult discussions these days about how much Empire State College will be like other colleges – for instance the discussion about calendar and about comparability of services wherever you are in the college.

Bob: Empire State College wasn't meant to be run on a kind of schedule like the German railroad. Maybe, actually, we are closer to the Italian railroad! (Well, my own experience on Italian railroads has actually been very good. And they were on time.) But – and this is also connected back to the

discussion of administration – because so many things at the college have not been clearly defined, they weren't necessarily done the same way on Long Island as they were in Rochester. The key to being a good administrator was accepting the differences. And the differences didn't matter. In fact, if it worked, if it wasn't broke, what's the point of fixing it? Maybe some people found the college difficult to understand and they would have liked to have something more clear-cut, so you could say, "Yes, this is Empire State College." But the college has never been like that. There always had been a kind of creative anarchy. At one time, you could probably say you had as many colleges as you had mentors, each doing things his or her own way. Some embraced that ambiguity and some administrators, and faculty, too, have left this place screaming and rushing back to traditional academia. And then there are the efforts that you mention about "fixing things" taking place today. There seems to be an inexorable movement toward standardization.

Margaret: Over 30 years have gone by since you came to Empire State College; has your career gone the way you thought it would? Did you ever expect to stay at Empire State College for most of your academic career?

Bob: I knew I wanted something different than the traditional academic department – playing the academic game and doing a lot of publishing. But I certainly don't think I expected to stay at Empire State College, or maybe at that point I didn't think about it.

But going back to the early years, the early faculty *did* have other options, as did I; we didn't really have to be at this college. Most of us had come from traditional academic disciplines and institutions; we thought there must be a different way to do things. I do wonder now, with a tight job market, if we are getting more people who just want a job in higher education, and it doesn't much matter whether they're at Empire State College or Michigan State or Florida State. I don't know. It will be interesting to see how long these newer mentors stay, especially as the job gets more administrative and people like myself, who are transitioning out, say to them as a kind of fair warning, that you don't necessarily burn bridges by becoming a mentor at CDL or at a regional center. But you do get away from the academic

discipline that you were trained in, and it's very hard to stay *au current* in those fields and still do a good job of mentoring. And when you're not publishing and dealing with colleagues in usually a sub-sub discipline, it's easy to get out of the groove. That's the reality.

Margaret: And what is your sense of the future of Empire State College?

Bob: I suppose that we'll still be driven to some extent by something like "student-centered" learning, which seems to have morphed into something more like "customer oriented." And there's no reason that students shouldn't have a wide range of choices – certainly choices that adult students didn't have in 1972. But if we get too driven by the market and by what's hot now or where the jobs are, we start doing a lot of things that have always seemed to me to be marginally academic. There's a kind of snobbishness about this, I suppose, in that I do think an educated person should be able to do some of those things that liberal arts colleges were all about when I was an undergraduate. And they're less that way today because of the reluctance to impose a core curriculum and, no doubt, there is a good side of that. But people can be spread all over the place or they can really be too professionally focused.

There's another concern I have: that being technologically sophisticated, up on all the latest applications – can be a substitute for a solid grounding in the liberal arts and sciences. They're not mutually exclusive, and I see some young colleagues who seem to be on top of subject matter fields – today, usually what my generation of academics thought of as cross-disciplinary fields – and mastery of the bells and whistles. But I've seen more than one faculty presentation that focused so much on the latter, that my colleague's mastery of the former was obscured. I wonder how this manifests itself in work with students?

Margaret: And how about your future?

Bob: I'm still doing two CDL online courses and some area coordinating work through the summer [of 2004]. I expect to do five courses a year, one each CDL term. I'm on a .25 line. (Does that mean I'd be doing 20 courses a year, were I full time? Maybe I'm being exploited.) I'm doing an online

course for Skidmore next year [2005]. I'm intrigued by the work. Each term is different online. Of course, every class in every term is different, but I'm kind of surprised. There are certainly similarities, but each of these online classes has a kind of personality of its own, usually shaped by two or three fairly dominant or out-spoken individuals, sometimes dead-wrong, at least from my point of view. But these people do *teach* the others something, probably because students see how opinionated or closed-minded they really are. They see what it means just *not* to be open to entertaining any new ideas. So I think, for example, that in one of these recent classes, students are really learning a lot because of the implacable ignorance of one student who was just *not* going to learn anything he didn't "know," by golly.

I don't know how higher education is going to change, but it will. I do worry that with this continuing expectation of more and more, the so-called entitlement revolution, we are all engaged in a kind of defensive credentialing. People need degrees not only in order to gain some status but so they don't *lose* status. That treadmill dominates. In this sense, I don't like the idea of higher education having to offer the latest new thing or, as I mentioned, to respond to every next new thing. So I don't think this college wants to keep trying to be the first to do things just for the sake of being the first. But I do think this college will continue to be one of the flagships of adult education, even though a lot of people are doing what we were among the first to do back in the 1970s.

One of my other concerns, both about the profession and myself, is the continuing – and increasing – tension between learning more about what is technologically possible to do at-a-distance – the "killer apps" – and spending that time reading some of the really good books, perhaps outside one's field. If I'm going to keep doing courses in social change, I need to understand how the world is flattening, in Thomas Friedman's coinage. (In my declining years, I also should be spending time trying to get a better handle on the big issues, reading someone like Marcus Aurelius.)

I don't know what the future of Empire State College will be and I really don't know what the future of Bob Hassenger will be.

The college and myself: we're both works-in-progress. I never would have believed, when I came out of graduate school in 1965 that, almost 40 years later, I would be sitting on a nice porch on a late spring evening in upstate New York talking about retiring from Empire State College. I had never heard of Empire State College. The college didn't yet exist. I don't know where I'll be in five years. I don't know where the college will be in five years. Stay tuned.

*Mentoring – Then and Now" was the title of Bob Hassenger's faculty lecture that acknowledged his receipt of the 1994 Empire State College Foundation Award for Excellence in Scholarship. That lecture was reprinted in *All About Mentoring* #6.

Poems

Alice Fulton

Note: Alice Fulton was our guest poet at the All College Conference 2005. We include the introduction to her work offered by Mentor Carolyn Broadaway, and a selection of Alice Fulton's poems. Thanks to both Alice Fulton and Carolyn Broadaway for their help in providing this work.

I first met Alice Fulton in 1974, when she came to the Albany Learning Center to begin her college studies. "The nuns at my high school didn't consider me to be 'college material,'" she told me. "I used to daydream a lot."

(I wondered what college they could possibly have in mind.)

She started by joining a study group on American women poets that met in my living room. I doubt there was another such college course anywhere in the country at the time, because feminist scholars at

traditional universities were still struggling with curriculum committees. Empire State College gave us enormous freedom.

Alice Fulton was serious and eager. She rarely shared her own ideas until invited. But she was so intense, her perceptions were so keen, and her ideas so original and well developed, it was clear this was an incredible mind. She was a remarkable listener, questioning, encouraging, helping other students to articulate their own visions. She must be a superb teacher.

In her "Statement of Educational Purpose" she wrote: "I wish to develop my writing ability through the study of literature combined with practical application. I am interested in exploring methods of presenting poetry in conjunction with the visual and fine arts."

She brought with her knowledge of communications and music, especially popular music, from her work at WRPI, where she broadcast under the name of Pearl Harbor and where she met her husband, Hank, who is here today.

At Empire State College, she went on to study photography, theater, short fiction, women's history, fabric art design and much more poetry. Her studies echoed and flowed into each other, as she pursued vivid and imaginative presentation in a variety of

media. She studied both the art and the marketplace of poetry with poet Lynn Lifshin. She produced a six-hour radio show on poetry. Women's history inspired her to write, compose and record a group of songs dealing with women's lives in different historical periods. Mentor Susan Kaplow wrote: "It is difficult to write an evaluation of Ms. Fulton's work because the risk of appearing hyperbolic is great."

For her final study, Fulton produced a volume of 65 poems, prompting Mentor William Frankonis to comment: "She is not a *student* poet: she is a poet – one from whom this volume is likely to be only the first of many."

Fulton's "daydreams" had given shape to an extraordinary degree program, which she completed in a little over two and a half years.

As she writes in her poem "Cascade Experiment:"

We have to meet the universe halfway.
Nothing will unfold for us unless we
move toward what
Looks to us like nothing: faith is a
cascade.

After a brief stint in advertising, Fulton went to Cornell to study poetry under the mentorship of the late A.R. Ammons, and just a few years ago returned to Cornell as professor of English, after many years of teaching at the University of Michigan.

Her published volumes of poetry have won many awards, including the 2002 Rebekah Johnson Bobbitt National Prize for Poetry from the Library of Congress, given in recognition of the most distinguished book of poetry by an American during the preceding two years. She has received many prestigious fellowships, including the MacArthur "genius" Award and a fellowship from the Guggenheim Foundation. She is a frequent judge of



(from left) Carolyn Broadaway and Alice Fulton

poetry for the National Book Award and several other prizes.

Alice Fulton's work has several times been adapted for musical and theatrical productions. Her poem "How To Swing Those Obbligatos Around" was performed by Marilyn Horne at Carnegie Hall's Centennial Celebration.

She also writes short stories: one of them was included in *The Best American Short Stories of 1993* – a volume I picked up because the stories had been selected by Louise Erdrich and have kept because of the story by Alice Fulton.

She has published a wonderful collection of critical essays titled *Feeling as a foreign language: the good strangeness of poetry*. I love her discussion of modern and postmodern poetry, of "fractal poetics," of the marginalization of female poets in the lineage of poetic tradition, and of her own debt to Emily Dickinson.

I am proud to say that Empire State College awarded her an honorary Doctor of Arts

degree at a graduation recognition ceremony at the Northeast Center.

One of my colleagues told me to be sure to tell her that we like her work. I will confess that Alice Fulton is the only person I have to read with a dictionary by my side.

I admire Fulton's courage as a critic, who, fearless of being labeled politically correct, calls for poets to move beyond narcissism and endless discussion of form to challenge "the self-congratulation" and "complacency" of American culture. She writes:

I am not asking for a didactic or polemical poetry. On the contrary, I'd like poetry to unhinge the prevailing culture with the same degree of subtlety – insidiousness, if you will – that it has used to uphold that culture.

I'd like poetry to remove its leaden eyeliner, wake up to its own blind spots, put its vision through tectonic shifts. I'd like a poetry of unnatural acts. That treats the mind to a mind. Treats the tongue as a muscle.

A poetry of cultural incorrectness, inconvenient knowledge ... That keeps covenant with old unsettlements. Casts off insulated bliss. Says to human viciousness, I wouldn't if I were you. The poem as epiphany cake sent to prisoners of American culture. The ebon and the flaxen. With a knife baked in it.

It is a great personal pleasure as well as a great honor to present to you one of our earliest students and most distinguished graduates, eminent writer, teacher and poet – Alice Fulton.

– Carolyn Broadway

What I Like

Friend – the face I wallow toward
through a scrimmage of shut faces.
Arms like towropes to haul me home, aide-
memoire, my lost childhood docks, a bottled ark
in harbor. *Friend* – I can't forget
how even the word contains an *end*.
We circle each other in a scared bolero,
imagining stratagems: postures and imposters.
Cold convictions keep us solo. I ahem
and hedge my affections. Who'll blow the first kiss,
land it like the lifeforces we feel
tickling at each wrist? It should be easy
easy to take your hand, whisper down this distance
labeled hers or his: what I like about you is

From Alice Fulton, *Dance Script With Electric Ballerina*
(Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press,
1996 *reissue*). Reproduced with permission of the author.

Dance Script With Electric Ballerina

Here I am on this ledge again,
my body's five rays singing,
limbering up for another fling
with gravity. Its true,
I've dispensed with some conventions.
If you expected sleeping
beauty sprouting from a rococo
doughnut of tulle, a figurine
fit to top a music box, you might want
your money back. I'll take a getup
functional as light:
feet bright and precise as eggbeaters,
fingers quick as switch-
blades and a miner's lamp for my tiara.
You've seen kids on Independence Day, waving
sparklers to sketch their initials on the night?
Just so, I'd like to leave a residue
of slash and glide, a trace-
form on the riled air.
Like an action painter, tossing form on space
instead of oil on cloth,
I'm out to disprove the limited
orbit of fingers, swing some double-jointed

miracles, train myself to hover above ground
longer than the pinch of time allowed.

This stingy escarpment leaves so little
room to move!

But perhaps that's for the best. Despite brave talk
of brio and ballon, spectators prefer
gestures that don't endanger
body and soul. Equilibrium

is so soothing – while any strain is a reminder
of the pain that leads to grace:
muscles clenched like teeth to the shin, swollen
hubs of shoulder, ankle, wrist, and knee,
toes brown as figs from the clobbering
of poundage. In this game, lightness is all.

Here's another trick. When passing the critics
turn sideways to expose less
surface. Think like a knife

against the whetstone sneers; *unsympathetic
in several minds flat and hollow
at the core shabby too
flaccid polishes off her pirouettes with
too assertive*

*a flick ragged barbaric hysterical
needs to improve*

*her landings technique bullies
the audience into paying
attention in short*

*does not really get around lacking
assurance authority fluency restraint roundness
of gesture something
of the air and manner of those who are ballerinas
by right rather than
assumption: one will say
I'm mildly impressed
by her good line and high extensions.*

I can sense the movement
notators' strobe vision
picking the bones of flux into
positions. Can't they see the gulf
between gestures as a chance
to find clairvoyance –
a gift that thrives on fissures
between then and now and when?

If a complex network, a city, say
could be filmed for a millennium
and the footage shown
so in three hours it woke
from huts to wired shining,
its compressed assembling would be like this
dance: these air patterns
where I distill the scribbling moves
that start at birth
and dissolve in death.

Till then I'm signing space
in leaps angular and brief
as an electrocardiograph's beat.
Now as I settle on an ending
posture: my chest heaves,
joints shift, eyes dart – and even
at a stand-still, I'm dancing.

From Alice Fulton, *Dance Script With Electric Ballerina*
(Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press,
1996 *reissue*). Reproduced with permission of the author.

Shy One

Because faith creates' its verification
and reaching you will be no harder than believing
in a planet's caul of plasma,
or interacting with a comet
in its perihelion passage, no harder
than considering what sparking of the vacuum, cosmological
impromptu flung me here, a paraphrase, perhaps,
for some denser, more difficult being,
a subsidiary instance, easier to grasp
than the span I foreshadow, of which I am a variable,
my stance is passional toward the universe and you.

Because faith in facts can help create those facts,
the way electrons exist only when they're measured,
or shy people stand alone at parties,
attract no one, then go home to feel more shy,
I begin by supposing our attrition's no quicker
than a star's, that like electrons
vanishing on one side
of a wall and appearing on the other
without leaving any holes or being
somewhere in between, the soul's decoupling
is an oscillation so inward nothing outward
as the eye can see it.

The childhood catechisms all had heaven,
an excitation of mist.

Grown, I thought a vacancy awaited me.
Now I find myself discarding and enlarging
both these views, an infidel of amplitude.

Because truths we don't suspect have a hard time
making themselves felt, as when thirteen species
of whiptail lizards composed entirely of females
stay undiscovered due to bias
against such things existing,
we have to meet the universe halfway.
Nothing will unfold for us unless we move toward what
looks to us like nothing: faith is a cascade.
The sky's high solid is anything
but, the sun going under hasn't

budged, and if death divests the self
it's the sole event in nature
that's exactly what it seems.

Because believing a thing's true
can bring about that truth,
and you might be the shy one, lizard or electron,
known only through advances
presuming your existence, let my glance be passionate
toward the universe and you.

From Alice Fulton, *Powers of Congress* (Louisville: Sarabande Books, 2001). Reproduced with permission of the author.

Unwanting

Laura Fulton Carpenter, 1969 - 1990

Laura: Latin feminine of laurus, bay laurel

As the waves grew ample in the outer mantle
of her mind, my mother dreamed
she was at Laura's grave.
There was a picket fence around it,
and inside, a little tree. From each of its leaves
a discrete fragrance reached:
carnation, lilac, rose and more.
She thought – a tree like this will never need flowers.

When she woke, day was undimming
the windows with so much *enough*
that some leaked right into the house.
Over her instant "cup of dust,"
the freeze-dried stuff, and muffin with Promise
that wasn't an abstraction but safflower oil
spread thin, she could still smell
the hardy perfumes – bloom split into bloom's
constituents – within the fence.
She had "Today," her morning shows, the heater
rumbling when she summoned. The touch-tone to me.
But she wanted that tree.

(To get a grip on memory, hold your hands apart
like so
and think this space, though definite,
can be minced into ever and much
smaller bits. And staring at that boundlessness
limited by skin, you'll grasp it: things go
farther into diminishment
and still exist.)

I'd like my presence in this hour
to be idolatrous – to have and hold
the instant rather than the else:
the meadows – held by winter purl – and galaxies
of books against the walls.
The synapses of taste, touch, tone

and sight. Of smell –
that helps us know things at a distance.

"I was scared of the fence.
But the tree I just loved.
Where did anybody get a tree like that?"

When the hushed philharmonic of the lightning
bugs upstaged the Independence Day displays, I
realized one firefly –
the minimal – could not have
turned the trees sidereal.
We put out the headlights to take it all in.

Desiring is nothing to having
the night sing to you in scents or gem.
Tree of completion – presence – and immersion,
what can compete with the unwanting –
the exdream – the world gone into god again?

From Alice Fulton, *Sensual Math* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1995). Reproduced with permission of the author.

Failure

The kings are boring, forever
legislating where the sparkles,
in their crowns will be. Regal is easy.
That's why I wear a sinking fragrance
and fall to pieces in plain sight.
I'll do no crying in the rain.
I'll be altruistic, let others relish the spectacle

as one subject to seizures of perfection
and fragments of success,
who planned to be an all-girl god,
arrives at a flawed foundering,
deposed and covered with the dung
and starspit of what-is,
helpless, stupid, gauche, ouch –

I'll give up walking on water.
It make a splash.
Onlookers don't want miracles.
Failure is glamorous.
The crash course needs its crash.

From Alice Fulton, *Felt* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001).
Reproduced with permission of the author.

A Little Heart To Heart With The Horizon

Go figure – its a knitting performance every day,
keeping body and clouds together,
the sky grounded. Simulcast, ecumenical
as everywhere, stay and hedge
against the bet of bouffant space,
you're the binding
commitment so worlds won't split.

Last week we had Thanksgiving.
The post-cold warriors held a summit
full of East meets West
high hopes. Why not hold a horizon?
Something on the level, equitable instead.
They said the U.S. Army held rehearsals
on monastic sand. In the desert,
lieutenants zipped in camouflage
thought back to where horizons were
an unmade bed, a nap
on, the world's edge.
Privates, nights
when they were sanded
by flower fitted sheets, ground out
in flower fitted skin: her, oh him.

This Michigan is short on mountains,
long on derricks
needlenosing heaven, making evil
electromagnetic fields.
“Talks on the fringes of
the summit could eclipse
the summit itself,” the anchor
admitted. Go figure.

Your reticence, your serene
lowness, because of you I have something
in common with something.
Your beauty is *do unto me* and who am I
to put you in the active voice?
I test my case
in your repose, a balance
beam, point
blank closure
that won't – bows are too ceremonious –

close. You graduate
in lilac noise. You take off
and you last.
You draw all conclusions
and – erasure, auroral – you
come back. But I am here to vanish
after messing up the emptiness.
I am here to stand
for thanks: how it is
given, hope: how it is
raised. I am here to figure
long division – love –
how it is made.

From Alice Fulton, *Sensual Math* (New York: W. W. Norton,
1995). Reproduced with permission of the author.

Collaboration

Lee Herman, Central New York Center

In response to some interest in our book, From Teaching to Mentoring, I was invited to speak at Bryant and Stratton, a proprietary business college in Syracuse for a faculty development retreat. This is the text of my talk.

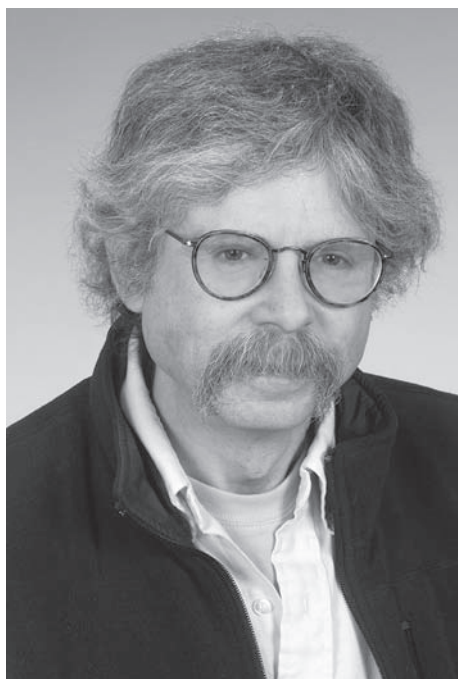
Thank you for inviting me here to talk about the book I wrote with my colleague and friend, Alan Mandell. It's called *From Teaching to Mentoring: Dialogue and Life in Adult Education*. An important theme in the book is learning as collaboration, and that's what I want to talk to you about. I know our schools are different, but I'll try to make some connections. That's the beginning of collaboration.

I'll tell you about three experiences of educational collaboration. First, a joint scholarly project, namely how Alan and I wrote our book. Then, I'll describe a college course for introductory students, called "Introduction to Culture," which I'm now offering on the web. The course requires, as part of its learning, that the students collaborate with each other and with me. I'm supposing that these first two examples of collaboration will be familiar to you, even if you do most of your teaching in classrooms and most of your scholarly learning on your own.

My third and last example of collaboration will be about an experience you, I, our students and all human beings share: solitary learning. But I'm going to ask you to think about that experience of learning in an unfamiliar way. I'm going to ask you to think of your own individual, solitary learning as a form of collaboration. In other words, I'm going to ask you to consider that *learning itself* is necessarily and always collaborative. But we'll work up slowly to this odd idea.

After I tell you about these examples, I'm going to suggest why they matter, why educational collaboration matters, not just

for academic learning, but also ethically and politically. I'm going to suggest that the kinds of educational collaboration I describe have an important connection to prosperity and justice in the world beyond



Lee Herman

the academy. And I'm going to suggest our non-elitist schools, Empire State College and Bryant and Stratton, have an important contribution to make for our students thriving in that world.

That's my outline: three examples of educational collaboration and then some reflection.

To begin: here's how Alan and I wrote our book. We're both long-time professors at Empire State College. You probably know that our college, rather than based on a single campus, is spread out through New York state, located in small to medium-sized offices. Alan lives and works in Manhattan. My office is in Auburn. Alan and I don't see each other very often. But we wrote

nearly every sentence in this book together. We worked by phone, usually on Sunday mornings, each of us on our computers. We'd talk and write for a couple of hours or less. Like most adult learners, we're busy, we have other obligations, and we're tired.

Alan and I are pretty similar. But we're different enough to bring different ideas and styles to our collaborative writing. Nearly each time one of us would blurt out a phrase or sentence, the other would reply with a comment or question:

"Did you mean this or did you mean that?"

"Do you really think this is so?"

"Yeah, okay, then what about that?"

And so on. You get the idea. We get along fine, but, since we behave the same way toward our colleagues and students, we can be quite annoying.

Also, we move rather slowly. But we savor what we do. We enjoy feeling our way along together toward some common understanding and some common words. We're lucky enough to be really curious about what is still not fully formed in each other's brains. While we wrote, we learned that to satisfy our curiosity, we had to wait for each other. If I waited for Alan to be as clear and exact enough for me to understand and he did the same for me, we'd each be learning something valuable from the other. Waiting made our collaboration work; that's why one of our chapters is called "Waiting as Learning."

In a world where learning proficiency (i.e. smarts) is usually judged by the speed with which one can produce the greatest number of correct answers in a given time, a chapter claiming that educational excellence needs slow time, needs waiting, could seem very peculiar. But have you noticed in your classrooms that when you give your students time to answer your questions and to ask you their own, that they learn better?

That chapter, on waiting, is my favorite one in the book.

So there's one kind of collaboration. Two people, waiting for one another, listening to each other, asking questions of each other, just because both are curious and both want to understand what the other really thinks. Our book is not just about helping students learn; it's also our learning to collaborate with each other. What your students learn is, at least partly, what you intend to teach them. But I'll venture to say that when you help them learn well, you've also taken the time to learn from them what matters to them and how they understand the world. In that collaboration, their world grows, and so does yours.

Do you see something you can use in this scholarly project I've described? For example, do you all do any team teaching or joint curriculum designing? Do your students do any collaborative learning projects? Are there ways you can wait for your students better, slow time down for your questions and theirs? What do you think your students might learn if they saw you team teaching and learning from each other? What do you think they carry way beyond their graduations when you give them the respect of your curiosity?

So that's my first example: collaboration as scholarship, scholarship as kind of reciprocal learning.

My next example is students collaborating with each other and with their teacher in a course. It's called "Introduction to Culture." It's sort of anthropological. You'll hear in a minute what I mean by "sort of." My college has some liberal arts general education requirements. Yours too, I think. I designed this introductory course to help students fulfill a social science or humanities requirement. Right now, it's designed as an entirely online course. But it could easily be a classroom course too.

Here's how it works: everyone begins with a common reading, which I picked. The book, by Paul Rabinow, is quite short, easy to read, and often entertaining. It's called *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco*. He writes about his first experience in the field as an anthropologist. His theme is how one gets to know another culture and other

people, all so very different from oneself and one's own culture, in language, religion, customs etc. Rabinow wants us to think, as he had to, about how wary strangers learn to communicate, respectfully, usefully and authentically. He wants us to learn something about drastically different human beings feeling their way toward making meaningful, valuable connections with each other.

I ask the students short essay questions

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about the themes in the book. And I ask them to make connections between what they read and what they've experienced, observed and been curious about in their own lives. They have to post their answers on the course web site. They also are required to post substantive comments and questions about each other's answers.

You see, then, that I'm trying to get them to collaborate with each other, just as you do when you foster discussions in your classrooms. Also, by asking my students to relate the book to their own experiences and to respond to each other, I'm trying to learn about them and to encourage them to learn about each other. I'm trying to get them to practice what Rabinow calls "fieldwork."

These activities are not just icebreakers or ornaments to the "real" learning. These collaborations are at the very heart of what the course is about. By learning to communicate with and from each other, the students – all of them strangers, all of them separated by distance and by interests – are

in effect creating their own little community, a *culture*. That is, in order to help each other learn the material and complete the course assignments, they are also learning, with all their differences, how to cooperate for a common purpose, even if that purpose is nothing more than just passing the course. So, for the sake of a kind of survival (one of the essential purposes of any culture), they engage in learning as *collaboration*.

Now it really gets interesting. I push the students' individual differences *and* the collaborative requirements even further. Rabinow's book and my questions about it are the only detailed ones I *alone* assign. There are no more lesson plans from me that are so specific. After these first assignments, the students have to join in to create the rest of the course – 4 credits, 15 weeks – for themselves.

Here's how it works. Each student has to create an individual research project. The topic doesn't have to be anthropological. But it does have to meet these requirements: It has to explicitly relate to the themes in Rabinow's book. The topic has to have something to do with understanding people different from oneself. Also, the topic must be about something that student is genuinely interested in, no matter what. And, finally, each student has to respond substantively to the other's project proposals, first drafts and final versions. In other words, in order to make the rest of the course for themselves, the students have to collaborate with and learn from each other.

I do participate. I help with knotty academic problems, like suggesting sources, asking for clarification, and especially helping to sculpt their topics to a manageable size for a one semester, introductory course. Sometimes, I direct, so no one sinks into the deep end. Mostly, though, I just ask questions (those annoying questions I mentioned a few minutes ago) and make suggestions. The students do the rest.

In this last week of the course, we're doing pretty well. Thirteen of the original 15 students are still around. There's been a lot of cross-talk among them on the web. And for sure, there's plenty of diversity in their topics. Here are some of them:

- music in the funeral rituals of different cultures (the student is a musician);
- Aztec religion (student says she’s just always been fascinated);
- modern Macedonian history (student’s great grandparents emigrated from there);
- establishing therapeutic relationships with street gangs (student is a community worker);
- the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq (student is ex-military, now a cop and very political-minded);
- bullfighting in Spanish history and culture (student wonders why we criticize other cultures’ cruelty to animals, but hide our own in industrial feed lots and slaughterhouses);
- the social psychology of stereotyping (the student is a psych major).

You get the idea. I’m not an expert on any of these topics, but by the end of the course I will have learned an awful lot about them and so will all the rest of the students. Don’t you think that’s a pretty good kind of collaboration? Common process, common general themes but a huge diversity of individual learning.

I don’t know yet if the course is a success; I’m not sure yet how the students feel about it. Most of them, for sure, will pass, even the ones brand new to college. I’ve done lots of other group studies or seminars like this, but this is the first one on the web. I do know that the knowledge learned – its content, process, its authority – will not have been mine, the professor’s. The students and I will have constructed it. The strictly academic value of such collaboration, I suggest to you, is that the students will long and firmly keep what they learned in this course. That’s because they had to invest so much of themselves in learning something they genuinely cared about.

For sure, there’s some risk. Both students and teacher, for example, have to be willing to float and improvise way beyond pre-constructed syllabi and lesson plans. People used to having full authority, the faculty, have to share it. People used to

having no authority, the students, have to take responsibility for it. This kind of collaboration is, therefore, a strenuous practical learning in the restraint of power and the skills of freedom. I think that’s a good “introduction to *culture*,” the American culture that so often announces its democratic values.

Does this sort of educational collaboration seem too inefficient to you or too beyond your students? I hope we can discuss this. For now, I’ll simply say that the students who come to Empire State College are no less practical-minded than yours. They come here to learn whatever they have to get the skills and the credentials they need to succeed in the world *after* graduation. Moreover, like your students, few of ours arrive already blessed as the best and the brightest. And, as busy adults, school is hardly their only serious responsibility. So the kind of classroom collaboration I’ve described can be more efficient and motivating than you might think. We do know from lots of long-term national research from elementary school through graduate school what the key factors are for academic success, no matter what age or ability of the students. There are two: the strong relationships students form with each other, and with at least one teacher. Collaboration.

Now, here’s my last example of collaboration. It’s an experience every human being has: the activity of learning that takes place inside your own head anytime you learn anything at all. We all do it, but we don’t always pay attention to what we’re doing. So it’s hard to describe. It’s hard to describe because this learning happens inside your own skull and no one else can go there except you. Second, it often occurs semi-consciously or unconsciously, so it’s hard to be aware of. When this learning does pop into consciousness, it’s often not finished yet, not yet one of those “ah-ha, I got it” moments. It usually sounds a lot more like noise than cognition. But this internal learning is nevertheless the seat of all learning; it’s the necessary condition of the kinds of learning we can see and test more easily. I’m going to suggest to you that this internal learning is a collaboration, an internal dialogue.

So let’s start with the noise.

Think about an experience of trying really hard to learn something by yourself. What do you notice? Don’t you talk to yourself, silently and even out loud? Do you hear a voice asking questions, cracking commentary? Do you say things like:

“Now what the hell does *that* mean?”

“How in the world does *this* fit with *that*?”

“This just doesn’t make any sense at all.”

Or, “Whoa, how did this sentence get to that one? What did I miss?”

You’re probably polite people, so I cleaned up my language, a lot. But I’ll bet you recognize what I’m talking about. I’ll also bet that this uninvited, internal kibitzing is pretty annoying. But does it remind you at all of those questions I told you Alan and I asked each other about nearly every sentence and idea we wrote?

“Did you mean this or something else?”

“Do you really think this is so?”

“Yeah, okay, but then what about that?”

Those were the questions that made us *learn* from each other. Now, I’m asking you to consider that this is exactly this kind of dialogue that goes on inside our heads when we’re learning on our own. This distracting chatter is the glimpse our ears get into the very activity of learning itself.

Now, I’ll take a step further. Think about what this noise, these distractions, make you do. Well, they really do distract you: they give you pause; they noodge you to reconsider. They make you think something you hadn’t been thinking before; they make you look for something you hadn’t thought to look for before. The confusion they cause is a strange kind of recognition: what you often recognize, thanks to the *kibitzing*, is your own ignorance. They make you understand exactly what you have yet to understand. They disturb the routine flow of our thinking and put us on to a new course, a new idea. These literally “extra –

ordinary” moments are the moments when understanding something new begins.

Learning is often defined as a *change* in mental behavior prompted by perceived stimuli. I’m saying that those changes I’ve described – the interruptions, the halts, the pauses – *that’s* the activity of learning. Learning is never passive; it’s always active. And when the activity becomes conscious, we don’t experience it smoothly: It feels sudden, interrupting, halting, confusing, chest tightening and stomach sinking. Even when our usually unconscious cogitation “gets it” – whatever “it” happens to be – it pops into consciousness just as those sudden, distracting and annoying questions do. We don’t experience distress then but rather the stunned attention called wonder. Wonder is the tingling relief that we now understand something we hadn’t before, and simultaneously the numbing puzzlement we experience at how in the world we got there.

I called this internal conversation “dialogue.” That word, dialogue, literally means, “talking something through.” Alan and I used the word in the subtitle of our book: *Dialogue and Life in Adult Education*. We did so because we wanted to say that all learning is a dialogue, sometimes an external conversation but always this internal one. And of course we were referring as well to Socrates, the first person whose description and practice of dialogue is recorded. With his annoying questions, he pestered other people to learn for themselves; and he was famous for stopping whatever he happened to be doing so he could listen to his own self-questioning inner voice. He called it his *daimonion*, which can be fairly translated as “my little demon.”

Think about it. Right now, I’ve been talking to you, talking at you, for what, a half-hour? My words aren’t teaching you anything. If you learn something from them, change your minds in some way, it’s because you’ve thought about them on your own, because they have stimulated your own little demons to question what you had previously supposed was true. And, when you are doing a good job with your students, you are doing nothing more, and nothing less, than this: you are stimulating

their own internal dialogues; you’re helping them become their own teachers.

Now, one more piece: What in the world does this dialogue, this internal conversation that *is* learning, have to do with collaboration? I’ve described the *labor* part. Where’s the *co* part? After all, isn’t this inside the skull activity just *you*, the individual, the *indivisible* entity? Of course each of you is an individual; no other person is exactly you. But inside, you’re a multitude, a multitude of feelings, thoughts,

Think about what this noise, these distractions, make you do. Well, they really do distract you: they give you pause; they nudge you to reconsider. They make you think something you hadn’t been thinking before; they make you look for something you hadn’t thought to look for before.

memories, habits, desires, each of which can at any given moment take charge and voice itself. One of those voices is your ability to reflect, to examine your own thoughts. My point is simply this: dialogue, *learning*, is nothing more than this self-examination, the conversation your mind has with itself.

But for that conversation to occur, however freewheeling, it has to be collaborative. If there weren’t some little voice inside you, conscious or not, that kibitzed and questioned, that gave the rest of you pause, you’d simply never change your mind about anything at all. You’d just keep right on going as you always had, believing whatever it is you’d always believed. You simply wouldn’t *learn* anything. Learning

needs that little annoying voice. You need to pay attention to it, take it seriously, work with it – that is, *collaborate* with it. Moreover, that challenging, questioning voice needs to do the same with the rest of you; it needs to take seriously, respectfully, attentively whatever it is you’re used to thinking, supposing, believing. Otherwise, it’ll just leave you perpetually dumbfounded. In other words, for learning to occur, the collaboration – the labor, the attentiveness, and the respect – have to be reciprocal. Dialogue, learning, requires the equality and respect of reciprocity. Otherwise, no matter how clever you are, you’ll just stay ignorant.

So that’s what I mean when I say that *all* learning is collaborative. Whether it’s collegial scholarship, team teaching, classroom or web based, or just when you’re by yourself, trying to listen to the noise inside your own head. You’ve noticed, I hope, that those other, most familiar, public kinds of learning are just simulating and stimulating the learning that’s really going on inside our heads, the collaboration of dialogue with ourselves.

Now, let me finish by suggesting to you why all this matters, way beyond our schools, yours and mine, way beyond the academy itself.

I’ve described three kinds of academic learning. But with each example, I’ve introduced qualities that are not merely academic: listening, waiting, taking the other seriously, reciprocal respect, shared authority, equality, freedom. These virtues are essential qualities of collaboration. They make learning possible. If this is puzzling, just ask yourself how well you learn when you are ignored or your curiosity is discounted, when you’re quickly told you’re too slow and only told to follow directions. And how well do you learn when you are allowed to decide nothing for yourself? I don’t think this helped you thrive intellectually.

But, of course, the virtues I’ve listed, which I’ll collect under the name of reciprocal respect, apply to every human relationship, from the intimate to the political. The virtues of educational collaboration, which make the heart of even solitary learning beat, also are the virtues we expect of a society that is diverse, just and democratic.

This is the respect you are called upon as a teacher to show your students. It is the same respect you are required to show to your fellow citizens, no matter how high your status. And the call is all the more urgent and demanding when you encounter abilities, backgrounds, questions, interests and beliefs that are very different from your own.

What does this have to do with our schools, Empire State College and Bryant and Stratton? Let's be candid. Our schools thrive because we are *not* elite. The people we allow to become students have not been the fastest and strongest in the academic games they were made to play when they were young and maybe more hopeful than now. They come here, to your school and to

mine, because they have few other choices and few other chances to get the credential they need to succeed in the world. That's an American world that praises democracy, equality and cooperation, but mostly rewards concentrated power, privilege and ruthless competition.

So here is what I'm saying: When you appreciate the necessity of collaboration, in your own solitary learning and in your classrooms, then you will help your students become the most proficient learners they can possibly be. And, through that same collaborative learning, you will be helping your students treat themselves and each other with respect. The students then just might do the same in their intimate, professional and political relationships.

When you model and practice educational collaboration, you will help your students reach into their dark, rough and bewildering places to shine their own lights. Through collaboration, especially the respect it requires, you will be giving them the very best chance they will have to succeed in a harsh world that does not much reward that virtue but absolutely depends upon it to survive and to thrive. You will be graduating people who, whatever their majors or careers, will have learned to make this harsh world a little more generous and a little more just.

Thank you for giving me your attention. Please, let me now give you mine.

"As they trace their education throughout their lives, people reveal that they often enter adult education classes to repair, compensate for, or fill in the gaps of the past. They dream about the university because in their lives they did not have the chance to study. They embark on personal development because they hope to overcome and to recover from wounds of the past. They decide to update and upgrade their work skills in order to move ahead. In the narratives, continuing education is always presented as a kind of further stage in the process of schooling. In other words, when adults are accepted as university students, they consider themselves as having returned to a process that was, for different reasons, interrupted."

Pierre F. Dominicé, "Composing Education Biographies: Group Reflection Through Life Histories" (in Mezirow and Associates, *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood*). (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990) (206)

Scholarship and Mentoring: First Thoughts

Lorraine Lander, Genesee Valley Center

I am now beginning a quarter-time reassignment to the Mentoring Institute and for the next year will be examining issues regarding scholarship, the scholarship of mentoring, and the wisdom of mentoring. In addition to my own reading and research, I also am very interested in engaging with many of you to get your viewpoints on these issues. One of the activities I will also pursue in this investigation is to produce an annotated bibliography on Mentorsite, which will include articles on scholarship and, specifically on the scholarship of mentoring.

As an introduction to my investigation and my reassignment, I wanted to write a follow-up article to the synopsis of Ernest Boyer's *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* (1990) by Chris Rounds and published in *All About Mentoring* #29. I would like to introduce some of the questions, issues and results that came out of Boyer's original publication of *Scholarship Reconsidered*, and I will focus



Lorraine Lander

on three works I have recently reviewed in preparation for my reassignment.

In "Beyond *Scholarship Reconsidered*: Toward: an Enlarged Vision of the Scholarship Work of Faculty Members," R. Eugene Rice (2002) describes his impressions of the impact of Boyer's extended essay.¹ Rice worked with Boyer at the Carnegie Foundation on the original report which formed the basis for Boyer's 1990 publication and believes that Boyer's publication was a "tipping point" in considerations of the scholarly activities of faculty members. Rice's essay details some of the significant results of Boyer's work.

According to Rice, the publication of *Scholarship Reconsidered* stimulated discussions of several broad issues related to the work of faculty at various types of institutions of higher education. One important result was to engage the attention of several professional and disciplinary organizations in active discussions of the conceptions of scholarship within their own fields. Guidelines for evaluating and rewarding scholarship within all four of Boyer's proposed domains were developed, including the domain of discovery (traditional research), the domain of application (also referred to by Boyer in later work as the domain of "engagement"), the domain of integration, and the domain of teaching. Results of the work by these various organizations in considering and describing disciplinary work within the four domains are available through publications of these organizations, research articles published in more general journals, as well as in two published volumes by Robert Diamond of Syracuse University (Diamond and Adam, 1995, 2000).

Rice focuses his essay particularly on two of the domains proposed by Boyer: the domain of teaching and the domain of application (engagement). In relation to the domain of teaching, according to Rice, several issues have emerged. While the issue

of what constitutes effective teaching was not new when Boyer's report was published, the publication has stimulated even further debate. Reaching a consensus on this issue is important to effectively assess and reward teaching at various institutions of higher education. Rice believes progress has been made in improving the assessment of teaching and describes several attempts to improve this assessment, including the use of peer review and the creation of portfolios for assessment of teaching. However, beyond the issue of what is effective teaching, the issue of what constitutes the "scholarship of teaching" is also debatable and continues to be discussed at various levels within academic institutions.

The scholarship of application (engagement) has been a topic for much examination since Boyer's report in 1990. According to Rice, the original conception of faculty service, including faculty engagement in outreach to neighboring communities, has been combined with faculty activities like scholarly writing on the practical uses of academic knowledge. Expansion and combinations of these two types of activities has provided opportunities for the scholarship of application (engagement). For example, one particularly important result of this expansion is community-based research, which involves more collaborative work between institutions of higher education and organizations outside of the academic community. An important goal of this collaborative work is to involve specific communities or groups throughout the research process starting with designing research, implementing research, and even evaluating research. Collaborative practice is another mode of the scholarship of application where institutions of higher education are involved in responding to social and community needs outside of the academic setting, and working interactively with local groups in the communities involved in these projects.

Rice concludes his essay with some words of caution. Results of a survey he conducted with early career faculty ten years after Boyer's essay found faculty reporting a wider conception of scholarly activity, which suggests positive benefits of the report for this group. Rice also notes a potential problem as well. As the view of what constitutes scholarship has expanded on campuses, some faculty perceive an increased expectation for scholarly work within the four domains, resulting in what Rice calls an "overloaded plate," particularly for new faculty. Thus, while Rice believes progress has been made, he notes that there is more to be done in considering the issues of scholarship within the four domains Boyer proposed.

Another extended essay that followed from Boyer's original Carnegie report, which also was the result of work of the Carnegie Foundation, is *Scholarship Assessed: Evaluation of the Professoriate* by Charles Glassick, Mary Huber, and Gene Maeroff (1997). In this work, Glassick and colleagues are concerned with one of the major issues raised by Boyer's original report: How to fairly and adequately evaluate the work of faculty within each of the four domains. They begin their essay with the results of a survey conducted by the Carnegie Foundation five years after the original publication of Boyer's *Scholarship Reconsidered*. This report surveyed academic officers at various institutions across the country. Survey results suggest that institutions were actively engaged in considering the issues raised by Boyer at that time. The vast majority of institutions (80 percent) reported having considered, or had active plans to consider, their systems of faculty roles and rewards. In addition, survey results found evidence of the use of new techniques for evaluation of scholarship of faculty members and evidence of an increase in rewards for effective teaching.

Glassick and colleagues propose the idea that institutions need a system for evaluating scholarly activity within each of the four domains that would be fair and equitable. Their approach was not to consider the details of activities within each of the domains, but to consider the meaning of scholarship, common features of scholarly work across the four domains, and thus to

develop a method of assessment arising from that investigation. Glassick and colleagues analyzed the existing system for evaluation of research and developed six criteria, which they believe can be used to evaluate whether work within the other three domains should be considered scholarship. The six criteria include the presence of the following:

1. clear goals; including the purpose, objectives and questions addressed by the activity
2. adequate preparation; including adequate existing knowledge, necessary skills and resources
3. appropriate methods; including appropriateness of methods to goals, effective application of methods and necessary modification of methods during the activity
4. significant results; including what was accomplished in relation to goals.
5. effective presentation; including style and organization, appropriateness of communication form, and clarity
6. reflective critique; which includes a self-evaluation of the work, appropriate evidence to support the self-critique, and the use of the critique to improve future quality.

Glassick and colleagues also mention several other key issues in considering the evaluation of scholarly work. One issue they discuss is the concern of appropriate evidence of scholarly work. They recommend the use of portfolios for assessment across the four domains. As a final note to their discussion, they present some ideas on the qualities of a scholar, including integrity, perseverance and courage.

John Braxton, William Luckey, and Patricia Helland (2002) take an active approach to considering the issues of scholarship in their book, *Institutionalizing a Broader View of Scholarship Through Boyer's Four Domains*.² This book contains a detailed literature review of publications from the ten years post-*Scholarship Reconsidered* and related to each of the four domains proposed by Boyer, and I recommend it to those of you who would like a more detailed discussion of this topic. In addition to the

literature review, the book contains the results of a research project undertaken by this group examining issues of scholarship within the four domains.

According to Braxton and his coauthors, the scholarship of teaching has received the most attention since Boyer's publication. Much of this attention appears to arise out of a lack of consensus on many issues related to faculty teaching. What constitutes teaching is one contested issue; opinions range from teaching being the simple delivery of knowledge to the view that teaching is "a multifaceted and interactive transformation of knowledge." Another issue in discussion of this domain concerns appropriate methods of evaluating the effectiveness of teaching as Rice (2002), as well as Glassick and colleagues (1997) discussed in their publications.

A third issue in considering the scholarship of teaching actually involves a lack of consensus about what constitutes the so-called "scholarship of teaching." Some of the key aspects of this debate center on whether knowledge of learning theory and educational theory are necessary and/or sufficient to consider teaching a scholarly activity. Another key aspect of this debate also centers on the visibility or accessibility of the knowledge a faculty member possessing in his/her teaching activities as one measure of its scholarship. In other words, should faculty knowledge of teaching or new knowledge created concerning teaching be considered scholarship if that knowledge is not accessible to others? Other debates in this area focus on the difference between "scholarly teaching" and the "scholarship of teaching."

Braxton and colleagues also discuss and review the scholarship of application (engagement). They see the purpose of this type of scholarship as the generation of new knowledge that addresses informational needs of groups outside of academia, particularly social groups. They acknowledge that there is an expectation of service to these groups in this type of scholarship. Issues raised in discussion of this domain since Boyer's report include the need to clearly differentiate service to the faculty member's institution from service to outside groups. Braxton and colleagues also

raise the question: If colleges do not take an active role in trying to serve society, will they distance themselves from that society? If this is true, they propose, then one end result may be the devaluing of education.

Braxton and colleagues report that since my publication of *Scholarship Reconsidered*, the least active attention has been given to Boyer's scholarship of integration. They theorize this may be due to the historic role each of the other three domains has played in higher education. One idea they propose is that while integration often involves interdisciplinary work, this type of work has been historically "marginalized" and seen as less scholarly than work that is clearly within an existing discipline. Historically, other types of integration such as book reviews, meta-analyses, translating academic knowledge to the popular press, or textbook publications have historically also been seen as less desirable.

Positive changes that may increase scholarly

... should faculty knowledge of teaching or new knowledge created concerning teaching be considered scholarship if that knowledge is not accessible to others?

work within the domain of integration, observed by Braxton and his coauthors, include increased collaboration among faculty, particularly those from different disciplines. Another positive move toward encouraging work in this area comes from the expansion of the use of technology, which fosters more collaborative work. While this domain has seen the least discussion it may be the most relevant to our futures (even our particular future at Empire State College) according to Braxton and his coauthors.

One important issue raised by Braxton and colleagues centers around the scholarship

of discovery. They note little change in discussions of this domain as a result of Boyer's *Scholarship Reconsidered*. The scholarship of discovery continues to be a preferred activity for many faculty. One exception to the continuing discussions of traditional research work for faculty has been an interest in the underlying role or purpose of this type of work to the profession. The authors propose that some of the emphasis on this domain of scholarly work may come out of the role that discovery plays in perpetuating the various disciplines in academia.

Braxton and colleagues also conducted an extensive research study to explore several questions of interest resulting from their investigation of the influence of Boyer's *Scholarship Reconsidered*. The focus of the research portion of their work was to address the following questions:

1. What is the general level of faculty engagement in the four domains?
2. Do differences in activity within the domains at different types of institutions mirror Boyer's proposals that different institutions emphasize different types of scholarship?
3. If you consider activity in all four domains across different types of institutions, are there productivity differences from institution to institution?
4. Are there different attentions given to the four domains that vary by academic discipline?
5. Do individual faculty characteristics (such as gender, ethnicity, professional age, tenure status, and prestige of the doctoral-granting institution) influence productivity within the four domains?

In order to pursue these questions, Braxton and his colleagues developed an inventory of scholarship, which includes a list of activities that they feel constitutes meaningful scholarship within each of the four domains. This inventory describes both published and unpublished, but public, evidence of scholarly activity. This inventory and detailed results of their survey can be seen in the appendices of Braxton and his coauthors' publication.

Braxton and colleagues advance some conclusions and some recommendations at the end of their book, based on both their review of progress since Boyer's *Scholarship Reconsidered* and as a result of their own research work. One important conclusion is that scholarly activity within all four domains has become institutionalized to some level at many institutions of higher education. They also found evidence that faculty at all types of institutions do engage in activities within all four domains. However, Braxton and his coauthors also believe that there is much work left to be accomplished in order to move forward in the development of assessment within the four domains and improvement in equitable valuing of activities within all four domains.

The authors made recommendations at the structural level of institutions, the procedural level of institutions, and the incorporation level of institutions. Recommendations at the structural level of institutions include implementation of assessment of faculty scholarship through use of an inventory of scholarship similar to the one they developed. They feel this will assist in promoting more effective and equitable evaluation of the scholarly work of faculty. One particularly important recommendation within this topic area is that a consensus must be reached on what constitutes a scholarship of teaching since this issue continues to be debated. Also, at the structural level of institutions, they recommend that opportunities for collaborations with business and industry should be fostered to encourage the scholarship of application.

At the procedural level of institutions, Braxton and colleagues recommend the development of institutional support mechanisms to assist faculty in engagement in *all* types of scholarly activities, but particularly those that are valued by that institution. They also mention the possibility of creativity contracts, which allow faculty who have worked extensively in one field of study, line of research or domain of scholarship to change or expand the focus of their scholarly work. This is done through an agreement with their institution for them to receive some of the consideration and opportunities that new faculty are afforded when they begin

their scholarly work. This could be one method of promoting scholarship in post-tenure faculty. The book also contains recommendations for the review of the scholarly work of post-tenure faculty.

At the incorporation level of institutions, Braxton and colleagues recommend that institutional mission statements should emphasize the domain of scholarship stressed by the institution. Further they recommend that tenure and promotion decisions should be based on performance within this type of scholarship and that fair assessment methods should be developed for evaluation within that domain.

While my work in considering the issues of scholarship, the scholarship of mentoring, and the wisdom of mentoring has just begun, I am hoping that updating the college on some of the questions, issues and concerns raised by Boyer's *Scholarship Reconsidered* will serve as a starting point for me and the college in consideration of these issues.

While traditional academia debates what constitutes the scholarship of teaching, I am curious what constitutes the scholarship of mentoring. I will be looking forward to learning more about these issues and consulting with some of you in working toward some mutual understanding. I am also hoping to work with the Mentoring Institute to provide opportunities for

discussion of these topics throughout the next year. Later in my reassignment, I would like to develop a questionnaire that will consider many of these issues for our college. Last of all, I also am looking forward to looking for the "wisdom" of mentoring. My initial search does not reveal much academic work on the wisdom of mentoring, but I am sure much wisdom exists on this topic within the college and I hope to discover some of that during the next year.

Notes

- 1 Available through the Empire State College Online Library Journal Collection.
- 2 Available online through ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center).

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John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (from the Preface); Touchstone/Simon and Schuster, Inc. 1938

"This formulation of the business of the philosophy of education does not mean that the latter should attempt to bring about a compromise between opposed schools of thought, to find a via media, nor yet make an eclectic combination of points picked out hither and yon from all schools. It means the necessity of the introduction of a new order of conceptions leading to new modes of practice. It is for this reason that it is so difficult to develop a philosophy of education, the moment tradition and custom are departed from. It is for this reason that the conduct of schools, based upon a new order of conceptions, is so much more difficult than is the management of schools which walk in beaten paths. Hence, every movement in the direction of a new order of ideas and of activities directed by them calls out, sooner or later, a return to what appear to be simpler and more fundamental ideas and practices of the past – as is exemplified at present in education in the attempt to revive the principles of ancient Greece and of the middle ages."

(Thanks to Xenia Coulter for this find.)

Socrates and the Zen Master

Mike Andolina, Northeast Center



Tell me master, have I searched in vain for truth all these years?
Perhaps, my dear Socrates you have, for truth is but relative.

There are no absolutes.

But master, how can you be so resolute that there are no
absolutes? Is this true, absolutely?

Like nature itself, truth is chaotic, a roll of the dice.
As Heraclitus taught us, you cannot step in the same river twice.

But master, does this mean that even morality, too, is relative?

Oh yes, what is morally true for you may not be morally true
for me.

You mean that even your Eastern concept of inner peace cannot
be imposed?

I'm afraid so, Socrates. The door to moral truth is closed.
But if I disrespect you, shout you down, oppress you, this would
be merely my Western way of moral life?

Absolutely.

Observations in Mezzotint

Denise Saint-Onge, Center for Distance Learning

This selection of prints was produced using a technique called mezzotint. Also known as “*manière noire*” or “black manner,” mezzotint is unique among graphic methods because contrary to other intaglio processes, a mezzotint design is created working from dark to light, rather than light to dark. The key to a fine mezzotint lies in the preparation of the plate. To create a mezzotint, the entire surface of a metal plate, usually copper, is textured. This texture is called a ground. The mezzotint ground is achieved using a rocker. The rocker is a thick, serrated blade with a handle. The blade is curved to allow the rocker to move from side to side. The end is fluted to allow the teeth to penetrate the surface of the metal plate. As the rocker is moved in a rocking fashion, from side to side and forward, it creates a series of dotted lines on the plate. Several thousands of tiny holes are needed to form an adequate ground. Every time the teeth penetrate the surface of the plate, it pushes out a small amount of copper, creating a mound, called a burr. The burr helps to retain the ink and creates the rich dark tones characteristic of mezzotint.

These prints represent an exploration of various subjects. I follow my inclination to create images that are personal and allow me to reflect on my involvement in the making of images. Two of the prints, “Homage to Matisse” and “Homage to Hasegawa” are part of an ongoing series on artists who have inspired me. After reading their biographies, I created images that are my personal vision and interpretation of their personalities. I invent a moment in time in which the artists might have stood, surrounded by objects and elements they have used in their work.

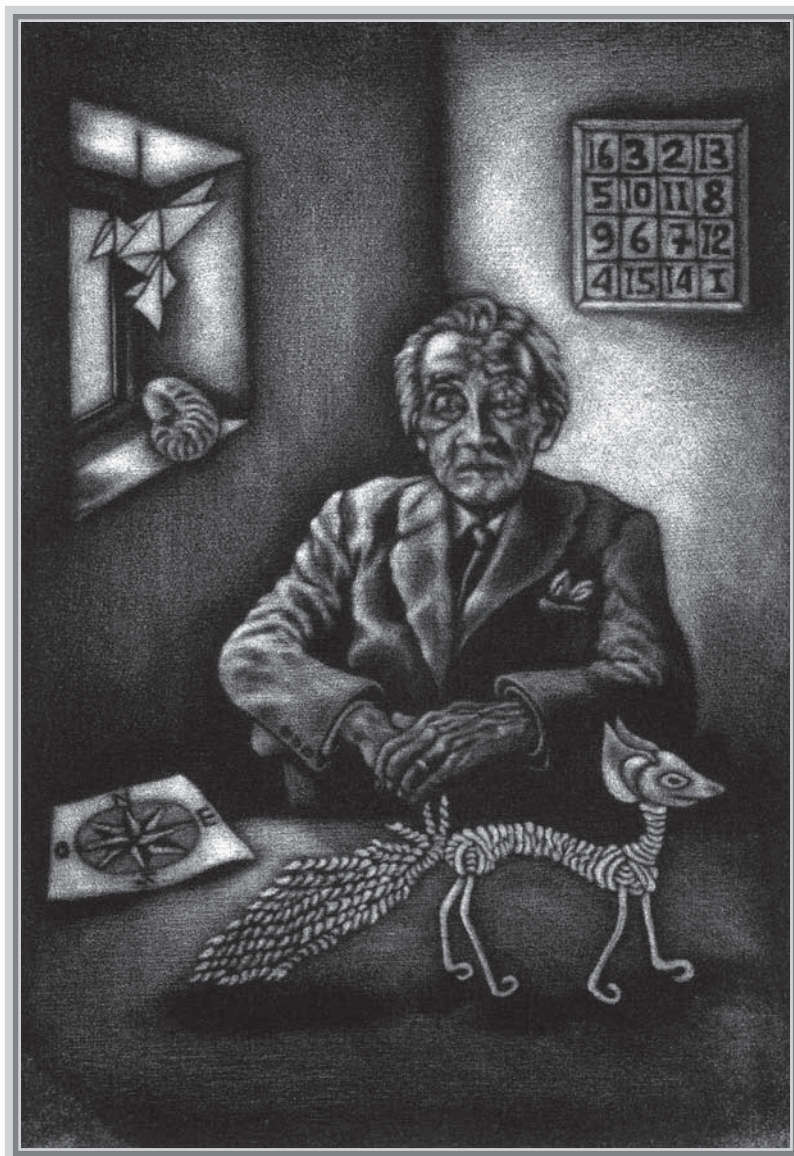
Some of the other prints are based on elements of nature and objects that I gather. Objects are fascinating, especially objects that are old or have served well. I find that some objects have an aura about

them because they are either mysterious or unusual. “This is not a Pen” reflects my recent interest in old fountain pens.

About the Artist

Born in Quebec, Canada, Denise Saint-Onge is a printmaker working in her own studio in Latham, ten miles north of Albany, New York. She became

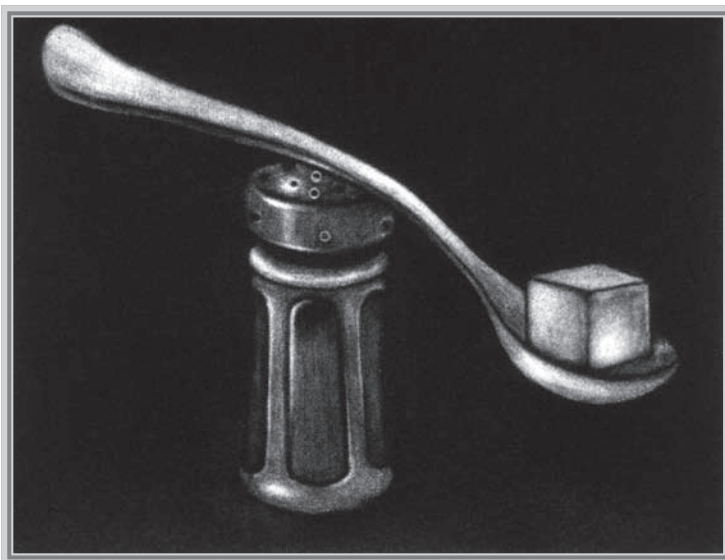
interested in printmaking while obtaining her undergraduate degree in studio arts from Plattsburgh State University. Upon completion of her degree, she was further drawn to printmaking and took courses and worked in various studios in Montreal, Canada. She completed an M.F.A. at the University at Albany in 2000. Denise Saint-Onge serves as a tutor in the arts for the Center for Distance Learning.



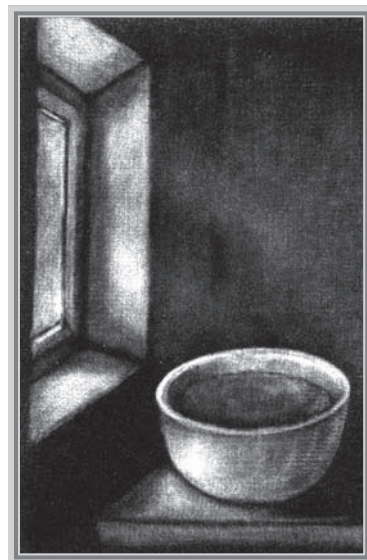
Homage to Hasegawa



Homage to Matisse



Sugar and Salt



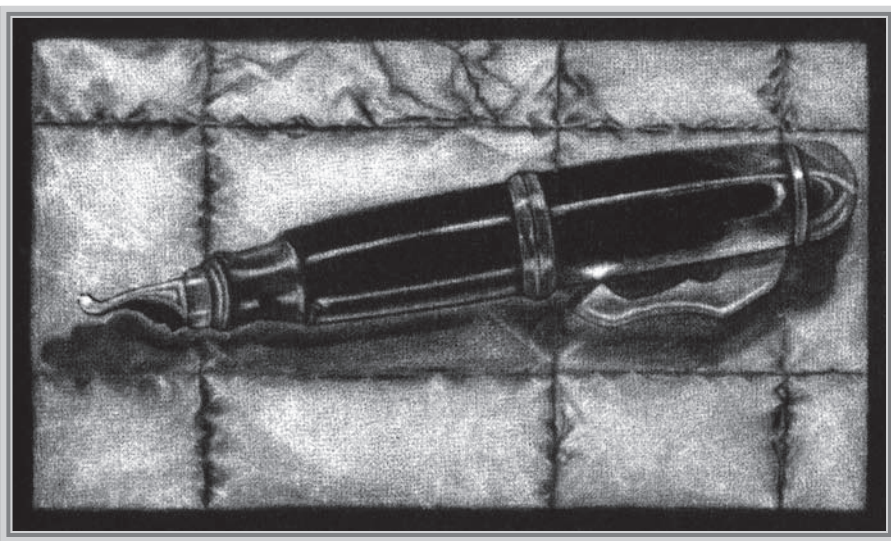
Sacred Waters



Grapes



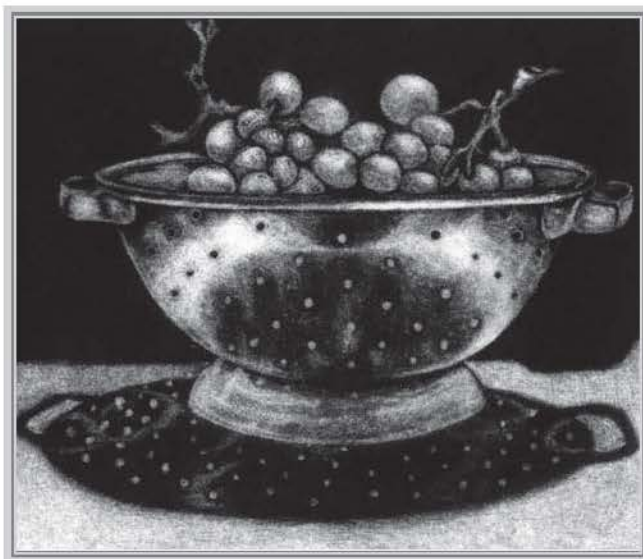
Smoker



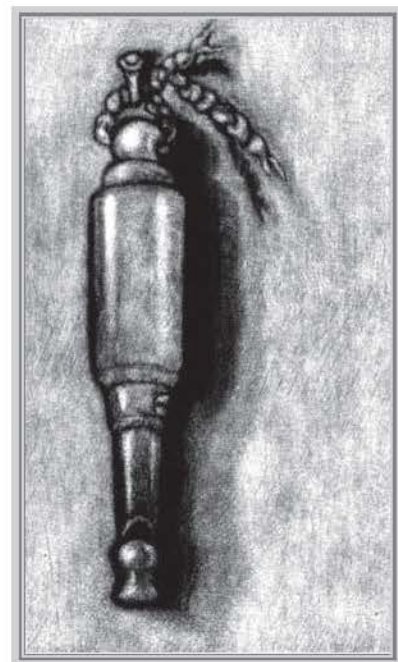
This is Not a Pen



Oasis



Grenache



Whistle

Some Qualities of a Learner-Centered Educational Institution

Eric L. Ball, Center for Distance Learning



Eric Ball

I was chatting with colleague Lee Herman from the Central New York Center about how daunting it feels to think through college policy issues when discussions are framed abstractly

in terms of the traditions, character, identity, market, mission and core values of the college. Encouraging me to go back to everyday experience, Lee asked me to reflect on instances of my own work with students – instances that might shed light on the qualities of an educational institution that I find needful for effective learning-mentoring to occur, for education to happen. As someone with a background in ethnographic research, this kind of grounded approach made a lot of sense to me. In this essay, I describe some of the instances that came to mind, discussing along the way some of the qualities of a learner-centered educational institution, which they suggest. (Students' names are pseudonyms.)

“Dimitra”

I completed an introductory-level Center for Distance Learning (CDL) independent study (a learning contract) with Dimitra, a recently matriculated student of a fellow CDL mentor. The topic of the study had to do with exploring cultural representations of nature from a place-based perspective, and it grew out of Dimitra's expressed interest in the nature and culture of a particular place in the northeastern U.S. Since she was relatively new to college, we designed the study to be exploratory and to focus on basic skills. For example, we decided that on her own she would seek different kinds of books (scholarly and non-scholarly) about this place of interest, find materials related to its natural and to its cultural history and

visit a major local library to investigate nonprint (visual, audio) resources. What she would write about was left wide open, but we built into the study mechanisms that would encourage her to recognize that there are different kinds of books, different kinds of writing, different kinds of questions these ask, and so forth. She would begin the study by reading a short essay published by colleague Eric Zencey on the “placelessness” often engendered by higher education, and by reflecting on the significance of engaging in such a study as part of her own degree.

Upon receiving her first short paper, I realized that she wasn't aware of conventional expectations for college-level writing. We set up a phone appointment to discuss “writing,” and I learned that her assumptions about it mostly grew out of her many years of working in a particular business setting where she had been disciplined by management into thinking that good writing means not wasting readers' time with explanations, explication or analysis. The idea that one would provide supporting evidence for an idea or explain what should be obvious seemed foreign to her. At this point, I realized that while we could keep our overall syllabus more or less intact, we should take something that the learning contract originally took for granted – that she would write five *papers* – and turn this into an explicit topic of study: What is a “paper”?

On her next paper, I examined the relatively disorganized first draft and pulled out a sentence where she made an original and insightful claim about the reading. I thought about strategies that might help her understand and practice writing a conventional college paper and told her she might just want to forget about the rest of the paper altogether and instead focus on writing a single paragraph that would support her claim. She still found this to be very challenging because, as she explained, she didn't know that she could

support her claim by writing sentences such as “The author argues that ... ” or “The book discusses ... ” She was under the impression that she would have to rehearse the author's arguments in their entirety – without summary or analysis – and that she would end up parroting and paraphrasing extremely large passages of the book. We worked back and forth on this particular piece of the paper and by the end of that unit, I was unconcerned whether she wrote the *whole* paper. I was satisfied with her one solid paragraph and her explanation to me over the phone that she was beginning to understand how several such paragraphs could work together to make a conventional college paper. She could try her hand at a full-length paper in the next assignment. In the end, I judged her first paper to be very good, even if it wasn't a paper in the conventional sense, it was “just” a paragraph.

I was able to work this way with Dimitra because I had the freedom to design a study in which the direction, content and evaluation criteria would be allowed to emerge through dialogue and negotiation. I was not under pressure to hold her to the letter of the contract that we had drawn up initially, nor was I held to evaluating her first paper according to an inflexible rubric. I had the flexibility to exercise and improvise on my own know-how, experience and knowledge as a writer and as an educator. I could take a look at what Dimitra wrote, talk with her about it, and then throw out what often goes without saying: that a student should write a paper up to college-level standards, or, at most, be given a chance to do a complete rewrite. Instead, I could propose an alternative way for her to complete the assignment that would get her one step closer to writing “a good paper” the next time round or the time after that.

At one level, this suggests that flexibility is an important quality for a learner-centered

college – flexibility in the instructor’s pedagogical repertory, flexibility in the content of study, flexibility in the evaluation criteria. But such indices of flexibility also translate into something else. For example, exercising them in this instance entailed calling the very concept of “the assignment” into question: Does “a paper” always have to mean “a paper” or are there circumstances in which it can legitimately morph into “a paragraph?” This suggests that another quality of a learner-centered institution is the maintenance of open-mindedness about the meanings and definitions of those very terms (like “assignment” or “paper”) that have the greatest tendency to gel in the heads and in the practices of educators.

Because Dimitra reflected at such length on what is involved in writing a conventional college-level paper, which had her thinking

... flexibility is an important quality for a learner-centered college – flexibility in the instructor’s pedagogical repertory, flexibility in the content of study, flexibility in the evaluation criteria.

a lot about methods and tropes for writing about the books of *others*, she gradually connected all of this writing business to the act of *reading* as well. In our discussions, she picked up from me the notion that “writing is always rewriting,” but she eventually came to her own realization – and told me – that “reading is always rereading.” Excitedly, she explained her revelation that reading a book is not necessarily a matter of proceeding linearly from the first to last page, that there are many ways to read a book, even at the

most mechanical level of page-navigation. In addition, she articulated an emerging understanding that different kinds of books require different kinds of reading strategies! In other words, an unintended consequence of my deciding to focus with Dimitra on *writing* was that she found herself arriving at some of the original pre-designed objectives of the independent study regarding critical recognition and interpretation of different kinds of books and resources. But she was “coming back” to these objectives on a path that was more meaningful to her than any I could have ever anticipated or engineered intentionally when we initially planned the syllabus for the study.

Through this experience, then, I learned something about the teaching-learning of critical reading and writing skills. This suggests something else about an educational institution that values student-centered learning: that educators continually seek to learn more about teaching and learning itself by reflecting on their experiences working with students. This entails, once again, maintaining open-mindedness about the ways that teaching-learning might occur. But, since teaching-learning is an integral aspect and a core assumption of education, this also suggests that a college’s open-mindedness translates into another quality I would call reflexivity: Educators simultaneously treat their deepest assumptions about education – for example, what “teaching-learning” means or how it occurs – as open questions in and of themselves, not as immutable givens. And, they adopt this reflexive stance not only when they are safely isolated from students (e.g., as a purely research question), but also when – especially when – they are working with students.

“Georgia”

In an online humanities course I designed and taught, I asked every student to watch one non-U.S. film or read one piece of literature and to write a piece of criticism or interpretation that draws on one or two of the “conceptual tools” the course introduces (e.g., cultural identity/otherness, beliefs/values, aesthetics). For many students, this was a welcome opportunity: they prepared creative papers and I engaged

in brief dialogues with them about some of their ideas. For others, I suspect, such an assignment was a nightmare.

Georgia ignored the directions for the assignment. She located a paper online that discussed the book she ostensibly read and submitted it as her own work. Plagiarism! My interpretation was that Georgia probably thought the assignment was unnecessarily overwhelming, assumed that she couldn’t get out of it, and quite rationally calculated that asking the instructor for help might not make the assignment much easier, that it would draw his attention to the fact that she was struggling with it, and that all this would eat up even more of her valuable time as a busy, working adult. Given this interpretation, I reprioritized my learning expectations for her. In fact, new learning goals presented themselves to me, which I thought could be at least as important as the content goals originally stated in the course. New goals I had in mind included:

1. Learn that critical interpretation of a film or literature is not necessarily as daunting as it may seem. Even if it’s not directly relevant to your area of study or to your profession, you can still do it, and it can be meaningful to you.
2. Learn that not every college professor’s pedagogical priorities include enforcing such prevailing cultural values as “fairness” or “honesty,” which – for better or worse – are not cultural universals. (This objective ties into some of the conceptual tools that the course introduces, such as the interrelatedness of beliefs, values and cultural identity.) And, consequently:
3. Learn to interrogate stereotypes, including stereotypes of “the professor.” (This objective relates to another goal stated in the course, which has to do with avoiding reductionism when analyzing culture.)

For her evaluation, I wrote my usual short response about not being able to evaluate the paper and pasted hyperlinks to college policies on academic honesty. She responded that she had read the book and watched the film but that she had no idea what to write about and that she was very frustrated. In my mind, her comments to me provided an

opportunity for learning. I asked her if she could tell me at least one thing – anything at all – that she found interesting or striking about the book or film. She did: She felt that the protagonist had gone through many of the same oppressive family experiences that she herself had experienced in her own life. And she explained that much like the novel’s protagonist who discovered cooking as a form of escapism, she discovered that working in a particular profession provided her with an escape from the oppression she had been experiencing. Next, we discussed tradition. I pointed out to her how the novel’s protagonist found an escape route *within* the traditions and customs of the culture that she found oppressive – that she discovered some liberating tactics. I asked Georgia to think about this in terms of her own experience: Was her job considered acceptable within her own cultural traditions? Was it a way of escaping them altogether? And I told Georgia she could try rewriting the paper by simply focusing on any parallels she found between her own life and the life of the protagonist, and to try doing so in terms of these questions of cultural traditions and liberation. She tried her hand at this and did a fairly good job. And it was *her* work.

Having flexible options available for dealing with plagiarism – as opposed, say, to being required to follow a fixed protocol for addressing academic dishonesty – allowed me to turn plagiarism, ostensibly an obstacle to education, into a spontaneous mechanism for a student to potentially advance her learning. It also was important that I was not expected to anticipate or to articulate every last learning objective for the course ahead of time, but to imagine new ones as the course unfolded. Even if these new goals were, at some level, very similar to objectives outlined in the course syllabus, my articulation of them in words (at least in my head) needed to change significantly in Georgia’s case. All of this suggests that not only is the plasticity of the learning objectives themselves important for a learner-centered educational institution, but so is the recognition that even “the same” goal can have multiple versions and different articulations, depending on the particular contexts that emerge as studies unfold.

“Aspasia”

I had a young advisee, Aspasia, the product of home-schooling and a straight-A student here and at every other college she attended. She came to us seeking to design a highly individualized degree program in cultural studies that addressed Internet-related issues. From the first moment I spoke with her on the telephone, I sensed that she didn’t like talking with me, despite the fact that we interacted very well in the online Educational Planning course. Given all this, I began to suspect that she was reluctant to enter face-to-face teaching-learning situations unless it was absolutely necessary. Was she shy? Was this a consequence of, or even a trauma caused by, her earlier educational experiences? Did it matter? Aspasia needed an institution where she could not only design her own degree within very flexible parameters, but also work in a nonface-to-face and predominantly non-voice-to-voice environment. The fact that CDL offered such an environment meant that she could pursue her learning goals and a college degree. This suggests that another quality of learner-centered institutions is that they offer diverse modes of study – even diverse ways for communication to occur within studies – in order to serve the diverse needs of a heterogeneous student population.

“The Country and the City”

In my previous example, diverse learning modes enabled access to students of diverse backgrounds. The following example works in reverse: By providing educational access to a diverse student population, a learner-centered educational institution facilitates those students’ learning.

Another learning goal in the Food and Drink in Cultural Context course has to do with critical awareness of diversity issues, one of the oft repeated requirements for degree plans outlined by the college’s area of study guidelines and one of the self-identified objectives of many students upon entering the course. One strategy for this which scholars of multicultural, intercultural and cross-cultural education have recognized is to ensure that knowledge and learning emerge from interactions among students (and faculty) who analyze

or comment on experiences and beliefs that connect with the cultural identities and assumptions about culture of those involved (e.g., see Lai and Ball 2004). And, indeed, I frequently observe such interactions facilitating learning about diversity in this particular course.

Cultural identities and cultural diversity are not just matters of race, ethnicity, class, sex or gender. They also can be matters of geography and the rural/urban/suburban/exurban. For example, in a discussion about the issue of home cooking and time (and especially of “having time”), a student from the northern border of New York and another student from a New York City borough began theorizing certain values and practices surrounding the issue of time in terms of demography. Here is an example of an exchange that occurred in the course:

City student:

I think that the issue of time in correlation with food habits has a lot to do with demographic status. Urban areas tend to be more on that fast-paced level. Suburban areas tend to be slower-paced, with different types of jobs, different lifestyles, which ultimately provide designation of time to be used in different ways; i.e., food concentration: preparation, cooking. Urban areas are also more densely populated and entail long commutes via public transportation. These factors contribute to the draining effect of one’s drive to dedicate any long amount of time to food preparation, especially when the whole process will begin the very next day. Suburban areas, like urban areas, both contain hectic job responsibilities and/or after-work family or other life commitments, which can have a negative effect on food habits. However, the hustle and bustle, congestion, and long, tiring, uncomfortable public commute are the main urban factors that contribute to the beginning fast-paced = fast food lifestyle, and the ending drained day = fast food lifestyle.

Country student responds:

I think I would have tended to believe your thoughts on demographics in earlier years, but I think these trends are changing. I live in a remote community in northern New York and believe me, my life is as busy if not busier than that of a city. The way I

look at it, people who live in the city may have to contend with the hustle and bustle, but many of the things they need are readily available to them. In the rural areas, people often have to travel to get necessities or go to school events or sports, etc. Teenagers in the country are often denied the convenience of daily bus services that can help them get where they need to be, therefore the parents are needed to taxi their children around which takes away from the time they may have been able to spend at home preparing a nice home-cooked dinner. These parents find it easier to zip through a drive thru and get a burger to give them a little extra time for their errands. Is that good? Probably not, but unfortunately the lives we allow ourselves to live do not give us a choice many times.

City student responds back:

OK, maybe we should alter that theory into demographics, along with situational/ economic status. My perception comes from personal experience within urban and suburban areas. I just tend to notice that I have yet to meet a city dweller who is not on the go. However, I have met many suburbians who are more laid back (and tend to eat better home-cooked meals) compared to us city folk. As you stated, however, there probably are many suburbians who replicate the on-the-go lifestyle associated with the city, through changing times and trends. Therefore, maybe economic or situational status plays a role in the classification.

This exchange illustrates a collaborative process of student-led theory-building which, one could argue, contributed to

emergent learning about diversity. One mechanism facilitating this was the fact that the course was attended by students of diverse demographic backgrounds who had sketchy or even wrongheaded ideas about the social, cultural and economic conditions of other places where their classmates lived.

By offering such online courses, the college provides simultaneous access to students and faculty in cities and in outlying rural areas. In doing so, it facilitates collaborative learning about cultural difference in geographic and demographic terms that grows out of participants' experiences. This suggests that a learner-centered college recognizes that the social construction of knowledge, skills and learning remains impoverished without the input and collaboration of students and faculty of diverse backgrounds and experiences. It not only strives to remain accessible to a diverse population of students and faculty, but also to provide mechanisms to facilitate rich interactions among them.

Concluding Remarks

Through these brief examples of my work with students, I have suggested several qualities of a learner-centered institution of higher education. I would not claim that my reflections suggest a typology of such qualities, or that these qualities are even truly distinct, but I suppose that tentatively I would say that at least three substantial qualities can be distinguished: flexibility, reflexivity and accessibility. As my examples suggest, these qualities are not only interrelated, but they can come in many different versions. They are really three

families of qualities: flexibilities, reflexivities and accessibilities.

In my more utopian moments, I believe that colleges and universities should continually work on maximizing these qualities. When I am feeling more realistic, I keep in mind that educational institutions, like all historical institutions, need to remain responsive to the changing social, political and economic contexts in which they operate. This could mean that at any given moment, a change in context entails that an institution become more flexible in one way but less flexible in another, more accessible to some groups but less accessible to others, that it cultivates more reflexivity here but less reflexivity there. Perhaps a college's overriding goal should not be to *maximize*, but continually to *optimize* the kinds and instances of these qualities in relation to its historical contexts – all the while trusting that in doing so, it will be acting as an historical agent, and therefore also affecting in positive ways, directly and indirectly, the shape, direction and evolution of those very contexts.

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The Mentor

Robert Congemi, Northeast Center



Robert Congemi

Franklin did not want to retire. It was as simple as that. Yet everyone and everything seemed to be militating against his desire. The pressure came from all sides – his family, his

colleagues, common sense. Incessantly, he was being scolded that he was too old, he was tired, he had taught enough, he should enjoy life, he should do other things, turn the work over to younger people.

“If it’s a matter of intellectual pleasure,” the cacophony pointed out, “Do new intellectual work, other work you’ve always wanted to do. Do more research. Do more writing. Why not? Why do the same old work until it’s all over? For how much time do you have left, anyway? We don’t live forever, Franklin.”

All of this left his head spinning.

And now he was starting to get sick, or at least wear out. The signs were unmistakable, he had to admit. Recently, a winter cold had taken a heavy toll on him, as if his immune system were no longer strong enough to fight disease. His doctor had diagnosed his illness as mere flu, but for Franklin it was not merely the flu. Yes, he had had something of a cold, something of a fever, but it was the extraordinary fatigue, the alarming fatigue that dominated him, what had broken his focus and took him from himself. For nearly ten days it had kept him from his work, unnervingly disconnected him from his usual life, made him feel absolutely at sea. That was why he tried so hard his first day back at the center, why he labored to concentrate and make a good start.

Dutifully, driving into the city, he arrived early at his office and looked through the mail that had piled up on his desk while he was away. He checked phone messages and e-mails, and responded to as many of them as he could. He phoned colleagues around the state to find out how the work of the committees he was on had been going. He contacted other colleagues who needed to speak to him, and made student appointments for all day for every day of the week, even for Friday, which he usually reserved for research and writing. And, once again, he urged himself to think about the study group that he would meet for the first time later in the day.

But, despite Franklin’s efforts, things just did not go well. So many people had needed to consult with him, and he had not been available. So much paperwork and business had needed to be done, and did not get done. Already there was the renewed sense of how much tougher everything was these days that had plagued him before his sickness – rising tuitions, less financial aid, fewer faculty, more work for those left behind, more stress, the economy since 9/11 and Iraq. Was it indeed time to give up? Had his time, too, come round? This displeasure and his worry gnawed at his strength.

“Good God, Franklin, sick again?” Frasier had said to be amusing, as they passed each other in the hallway. Frasier was a sociologist, ten years Franklin’s junior, who occupied the office next to Franklin’s. “Rather a lot lately. Shouldn’t you retire?”

Not that he had ever been one of the stars of the college. He certainly had not been a theoretical architect of this experiment in teaching adults in new ways. He had not managed it from on high, as president or head of academic affairs, successfully guiding the school for 30 years while other experimental colleges had faltered. He had simply held on as best he could as a mentor, as professors were called at the college, a

worker bee – serving on committees, trying to be a good scholar, but mostly meeting his students year after year as they came to him, looking to see what they needed, trying to find strategies for teaching them as best he could.

Already a mere phone call with one of his new students, one of the new breed of students, he supposed, had upset him. Franklin had been informed by admissions that her records showed her to be a weak student who had been told she needed remedial work before anything else, so that when this student answered Franklin’s return phone call, which was a week late, she made it clear she was in no mood to be sympathetic to him.

“I have been waiting for you to get me started, sir,” she had said, startling Franklin with the extent of her annoyance, with her palpable disrespect.

“Well ... then ... can you come in today?” he had responded immediately, trying hard to make something up to her. “I can see you today. This afternoon, Ms. Jakes. Is that possible?”

“It’s possible,” Ms. Jakes had answered, hanging up.

Feeling as shaky as he was, this brief exchange along with everything else had been enough to compromise the rest of his morning, and about noon, when Franklin took some time to try and rest and eat a little, to maintain his resolve, he found his attention wandering, his mind drifting back once again in memory, something that he was doing more and more recently, in what he supposed was some kind of instinctive gesture for reviewing his life. Soon, this time, he was thinking back to his early days at the college, over 30 years ago, to nearly the college’s first days, too.

“Actually, it has always been this way for me – right from the start,” he said to himself. “It has never been easy. There has

always been so much important work to do, hard and important work, and I wonder if I've ever really been up to the task."

Feeling this way, the memory of Jane Marks came to his mind, one of his very first students – over the years Franklin had thought of her on occasion. He had certainly missed the mark on that one. His experience with Jane could be symbolic of so much. In those days, the learning center had been temporarily housed in the basement of an old commercial building, until the college was more on its feet. His office had been at the end of a small hallway and, suddenly, Jane was at his door. It was in the mid '70s, when liberalism was everywhere in the air, and certainly not a bad thing, as it seemed sometimes to him to be thought now. The influence of the '60s was still present; Richard Nixon had visited Communist China even; a college such as theirs, individualizing education for adult students, flexible, innovative had recently been born.

"They told me to come here, professor," she explained, tentative, shy. "I've been assigned to you, I guess."

Jane was a slight, gray-haired woman, who wore a suit jacket over her dress, about 50, Franklin guessed. She looked very, very tired, that was clear, and even shaky. Taking a seat by his desk, which Franklin offered her as he stood up, she came to the point after a few minutes, rather frankly, he thought, and told him her story.

"You see, professor, I have been nursing my husband for the past three years now. He has cancer. It has been very hard." She looked at him, someone she had just met with – gratifyingly – extraordinary trust. "Caring for him is all I do."

Not knowing quite what to say, Franklin nodded, sympathetic.

She went on. "But I must do something else with my life. I **must**. That's why I'm here. I'd heard about your college, and I thought ... I thought maybe I could take some courses."

Franklin had only two weeks earlier reached his 30th birthday – he was virtually half this woman's age. But he also had been thrilled by the chance to work for the college, with

its special mission, so that he pressed on with Jane, enthusiastically, energetically, regardless of the mere disparity in their ages. Actually, at the time, he thought he was already at the top of his abilities.

"Well, what is it you want to study?" he asked her.

She was quick to answer. "Anything, professor. Almost anything. As long as I feel I'm getting **somewhere**. As long as I feel I'm doing something other than watching my husband struggle." Seated before him, she seemed small, like a little girl, despite her gray hair.

To his shame, Franklin then proceeded with her in what he perceived as a most admirable way.

"Well, then, Jane, what might it be? What might you like to study?"

"I ... I don't know ... ," she had answered "There's so much ... maybe some literature ... maybe the classics ... plays or novels ... I've always wanted to study great plays and novels, and poetry, too ... can I do that?"

"Of course you can," he had told her.

As literature was his field, which was presumably why Jane had been sent to him, Franklin decided right then and there to tell her without losing any time, unable to resist a modicum of enthusiasm, about the earliest classics, in the drama, at least – Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides – going on and on and on.

"They are the beginning of drama, Jane, these Greek playwrights. Arguably the best of all time. Start with them. The Oresteia, Antigone, Alcestis ... and don't forget Aristophanes, The Lysistrata, The Clouds, The Birds ... These Greeks lived for beauty Jane, as no other people before or after them, and their drama is as beautiful as it gets, however terrible."

By the time she left, he had given her reading assignments, bibliographies, themes, issues to consider. And when she was gone, as he turned to other tasks – new readings, meetings, up-coming conferences – he was quite pleased with himself for getting her off to such a good start, and so quickly. Why not?

But afterwards, Franklin did not hear from Jane Marks, not for several weeks, which surprised him, and when she finally called him, he was taken even more by surprise, much more.

"Professor, my husband has died," she told him, almost apologizing! "I wasn't able to do any of your assignments. Or think about the things you told me to think about. I'm sorry."

Death? And sorry? Such a thing had never occurred to him! Dear God, that had certainly drawn him up! How sobering working with adults had been. How different, how challenging, even disconcerting. And here he was, 30 years later, still faced with, still struggling with, people and their situations often so much more challenging than a mere classroom of freshmen at the usual college.

Nor was his newest of students to be placated, he found out later in the afternoon, after his lunch and rest break. Suddenly, the receptionist downstairs was calling him to tell him that Ms. Jakes was on her way up to his office. Franklin was on the second floor of their new learning center, a handsome building in a commercial park.

Ms. Jakes was very different from Jane Marks. She was a big, dark, imposing woman, very sure of herself, around 40. If Franklin had thought that in person and finally with her appointment that she might be more pleasant, he was wrong. She was **clearly** very annoyed – felt she had every right to be. For a moment Franklin thought that conceivably her sureness might at bottom be a facade for insecurity, but he quickly disabused himself of that idea. Not that Ms. Jakes was inappropriate to the point of being inexcusably out of line – she did not go that far – but she was surely playing near the edge. With his absence, illness notwithstanding, she had been given something of an upper hand, and apparently she would use it to her advantage. Was she indeed one of the new kinds of student, the post-9/11 student of unprecedented toughness, beyond compromise?

"Ah, we finally get to meet," Franklin said to her when she was in his office, extending his hand, truly wanting to get her started off well. She took his hand, but it was in no

way a commitment. “You really do want to get going, don’t you, Ms. Jakes?”

“That’s right,” she said, dryly.

“Well ...” Franklin held the materials regarding her academic record before him on his desk. “I am happy to work with you.” He took a deep breath, trying to gather his strength, wishing he were able to start on a different tack, but really without an option. “But I think we’re going to have to start with polishing up your writing skills a little, before doing anything else. According to the recommendations from admissions.”

She bristled a little. “Polishing my writing skills up a little?”

“Yes. The college wants you to work on that first.” He was as courteous as he could be. “They’ve told you that, haven’t they?”

She arched an eyebrow. “Huh. I got a letter. Some letter.”

He tried to explain. “We only mean to do the right thing. To get you prepared for everything else that comes later.”

“Yes, **but**,” she said, leaning forward, dismissive, not about to relinquish control of the situation. “I didn’t take that writing assignment **seriously**. I didn’t know you were going to make such a **big deal** about it.”

Franklin hesitated.

“And, that isn’t saying anything about the **tone**, either,” she added. “Somebody here should ‘polish up their writing skills a little,’ too. That letter was offensive to me. It could have been said a lot nicer.”

Ms. Jakes looked at Franklin almost as if she were the teacher – indeed, in a sense, she was.

“So, I tell you what, professor. I want to take that writing test **again**. To take it **seriously** this time.”

“Well ... well ... I suppose you can,” he managed to say. “If you feel that strongly.”

“I feel that strongly.” She loomed large in front of him. “And when can I do that?”

“I’ll ... speak to the admissions people, I suppose,” Franklin improvised.

“Good.” Now Ms. Jakes leaned back, triumphant – there was no denying it. “Good. Because I want to take something in my **field** first. Something I can get reimbursed for. Something like social work. My institution will pay for that. It is **relevant** to my job responsibilities.”

“I see,” Franklin said to her.

When Ms. Jakes had gone, Franklin did indeed wonder why he didn’t retire, retire on the spot, why he insisted on persisting in this work at all! This woman had clearly overmastered him. He had to laugh at his ineptitude. Was it just Ms. Jakes? Was

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his wife at his side.
She had stood by him
for years!*

she just an anomaly? Or was she indeed a symbol of the new times? Or, perhaps worst of all, was it merely the fatigue from his illness, an inability of his to bounce back to work now that he was older, that had caused her triumph? Franklin didn’t know.

The implications of these questions struck him as of the first order. Wasn’t his physical condition and what was happening to him at the college part of all that was happening to him in his life? Franklin pondered his life outside his work – his wife, Emily, for instance. Wasn’t the way things were now between them consistent with everything else? He thought of their conversation the other night – another mere phone call – and with that memory, he felt as if the very gods themselves were conspiring against him, to

say nothing of this first day back. He and Emily had proceeded to have another of those unsettling exchanges – which recently this, too, he was having more and more of – where they simply were no longer in sync with each other, as they had been for so many years, another instance underscoring his recent fear that he and his wife were indeed irrevocably drifting apart, something he had once thought impossible. In his worry, he imagined his bride of 40 years had truly become someone else to him.

“Well, Franklin, how do you feel? Are you any better?” she had asked from somewhere across the country. Franklin was in bed, where he had been for days, alone in their house. It was not a question of solicitude, really, but one seeking confirmation.

“Fine,” he said to her, lying.

She of course was not convinced. “You’re sure?”

“I’m very sure.”

She, too, like Ms. Jakes, like Frasier, would not be put off. “You know you really **should** let go. What are you waiting for? What are you holding on to?”

“Emily, please ...”

There was a time when there had been perfect harmony between them. Franklin truly believed that. He would insist on the point with anyone. Indeed, until two or three years ago, he would have told anyone that he was the luckiest man alive to have had Emily as his wife at his side. She had stood by him for years! Yet, he had to admit, how much could a spouse legitimately expect from another person? For now, it was as if they spoke to each other from both an emotional and intellectual divide. At some point, Emily had lost a certain interest in him and gone on more completely to her own interests.

“Soon we shall be like ...” In his panic, he tried to find a parallel to their situation in literature. He was simply absurd.

Most recently, Emily had joined up with an experimental theater group, of all things! Where had **that** come from?

“We are trying to create new theater, Franklin,” she told him, off to a performance hundreds of miles away. “A

theater that includes modern technologies – computers, film projections, light simulations – together with things like mime and contemporary dance – to annihilate technology, at least to raise issues with it. Isn't that clever? We're turning it on itself."

Once again, Franklin had hardly known what to say. He knew that he should have been keenly interested in such an aspiration, but energy and enthusiasm for it had simply not been there. Was it too avant-garde for an old professor? Or was it – to his shame – merely resentment towards the probable loss of the woman he had lived with for most of his adult life? At a performance by her group that he attended, Franklin watched Emily, a woman nearly 60 and graying, too, in a black leotard, contort her body into what he was told were expressionistic shapes denoting the effect of modern life on the human psyche! That was absurd, too.

"There is life after retirement, Franklin," she had observed, like everyone else. "You just have to have things **planned**. You can still do research, read, if you don't want to completely let go of the old life. And still do a little teaching." She had phoned him this time from an apartment in the city that she rented for convenience whenever necessary. Franklin preferred their little, suburban home. "If you don't want to strike out after something completely new. No one is saying that you have to give up your old life completely."

Had their life together meant so little to her? Their children? Their home? Their daughter Stella, for instance. On the west coast somewhere, 30 now, in and out of seemingly meaningless relationships, going nowhere professionally, totally at sea herself. Shouldn't they be helping her? Or the home they had occupied together, the place most couples used at least as a point of comforting nexus. It seemed as if Emily was scarcely there anymore.

At the conclusion of these thoughts, Franklin felt more put upon than ever. His head was spinning again. What was he to do? As so often in his life, instinctively, reflexively, he turned to his next tasks. People teased him about doing this, but that was simply the way he was, or the way he had become. When he was in doubt as to what to do next, he dealt with what he

perceived to be the existential dilemmas of life by turning to his next chore. As it grew later in the afternoon, Franklin read through a handful of essays by his students, and typed his evaluations of them into his computer, into the record-keeping system of the college. With one of the essays a student he had been very concerned about had finally started to write better. Another had written analytically for the first time rather than out of personal reaction. A third was really impressive, the student drawing from good research, seeing literature as

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coming from an historical or intellectual matrix, rather than as some accident of imagination, floating above time. At about four in the afternoon, he phoned the learning center in another part of the state, and talked to his colleague there about a new committee Franklin was being asked to serve on. Besides wondering if he had the energy to do this work, Franklin also worried about how useful he could truly be on this committee. Its mission was to plan the direction the college for the next few years! Franklin did not think he could be of much help. Wasn't he a dinosaur? But his colleague insisted he take part.

"I don't understand what you're talking about, Franklin. I'll see you in March, at the meeting."

"Maybe," Franklin told him, not relinquishing the point.

But doing this work still left much to be done. Franklin wasn't sure he felt any better at all, and he still had the first meeting of his study group in front of him. The study group of course was the biggest enterprise of the day. He had been doing study groups for years. Being in a classroom was one of the things he liked to do best. But this particular group was not going to be easy. He had wanted to provide a study on Shakespeare for some time, for too long, but he had delayed it because of other responsibilities, and now it was upon him, perhaps more upon him than he would wish. Somewhat to his surprise, the study had drawn a great number of people, all very different, given the nature of the college, all at vastly different levels of ability and with widely different interests, mostly whom he knew had very little knowledge of Shakespeare or even interest in confronting him. Franklin's study, he now understood, was being seen mainly as satisfying new university-wide, general requirements – indeed, Franklin had offered the study in part for this very reason. But the large response to his offering had been quite unexpected. Now, as he reached his classroom, he could see that he was in for trouble, plenty of it. There was palpable discontent in the room, distress, if not rebellion. People were obviously at a loss. He wasn't imaging it. For one thing, he had given these students reading assignments and questions to consider ahead of time, as usual with study groups, to do a good thing, but it was clear that this strategy had backfired. As far as he could tell, Franklin found himself standing before a classroom of very, very anxious people, people who had just come from offices, job locations, babysitters!

Sighing, Franklin drew himself up, and, as he had done countless times before, gave himself to his task. How could he bring these people around? Wasn't it absurd that he still asked himself this question after all these years? That he still needed to confront himself with such questions at this point in his professional life? But

yet wasn't there something right in that? Something exciting, something ... even beautiful – an old professor still trying to adjust his teaching to his students, still trying to rearrange the content of his field to better bridge the knowledge in his head and the particular students before him? Wasn't this impulse to teach well still one of the greatest of intellectual pleasures – no, pleasure of any kind – that he might have? His understanding of teaching still emerging, his very mind still emerging? And for people, not specialists, but for ordinary people? Wasn't that what he always wanted his professional life, his life itself, to be principally about?

Feeling a mixture of concern and yet, strangely, exuberance – exuberance at his age – he made his way to a seat at one of the tables which had been arranged in a square to facilitate discussion. The faces that looked at him were very set, carefully watching him. A middle-aged woman sitting across from him actually seemed a bit frightened. A wave of spontaneity and re-direction overcame Franklin.

“Hello. Welcome to this study group on Shakespeare.”

People glanced at each other.

Franklin hoped something of a positive reputation had preceded him, though he suspected that in this group there were several students new to the college. That was one of the ways the college worked.

He smiled at them. Did he appear avuncular? A cliché?

“I think tonight I want to start out differently,” he announced, his arm resting on the books he had brought with him. “More differently than I did when I last offered this study group, I suppose.” He caricatured himself, but, given the situation, that was all right. “In the past – it was a perfectly respectable thing to do – my opening remarks were pretty much academic. I pretty much would present a list of goals and plans and assignments. Fairly early on, I would direct the class to the major critics of Shakespeare, people who presumably make understanding him much richer and sophisticated – critics like Coleridge, Kitteridge, Wilson Knight. And

then, for the most part, I would send people on their way that first night.”

Franklin sighed again. He was in a strange, comfortable mood.

“But I don't think I will do these things tonight.” It was half a playful gesture. “I'm feeling in a great mood of change,” he told them. “I'm feeling a little bit of a rebel tonight.”

He noticed a few students smiled at this, relaxing a bit.

“It must be recognition of inevitable change. Who knows? Anyway, tonight, I just want to start this study group by, on the one hand, acknowledging your interest, however it is – otherwise you wouldn't be here – without trivializing the challenging task that you have in front of you, on the other. Forgive the impulsiveness of my strategy, but I think I just want you to relax, and let me help you merely ... how should I put it? ... meet Shakespeare. For now, let me introduce this man to you as best I can as a human being, much like you and me. Let's leave the matchless poetry and the depth of psychological perception aside for now. Or the medieval and Renaissance philosophizing that affected his thinking. I will tell you soon enough about such things as the Great Chain of Being, 16th century Catholic thought, the birth of English Protestantism. But for now let me merely tell you about a boy from a small, bustling town in rural England, who left his home and young family – as he probably should not have – to do in the big city what he believed he was born to do. Let me tell you how he must have lived in those early days, how he attached himself to a theatre company, how he used his plays to make a good living. For now, for tonight, I just want you ... as I mentioned ... to meet Shakespeare.”

As Franklin spoke, he was aware that if colleagues were listening in on him, they might very well be asking why he hadn't thought of introducing Shakespeare this way before, or that others more purely academic might be scandalized. But he pushed on. He would in time cover all the academic bases. Yet, for now, he also would try to give honor to the concerns and interests of the people in the room. He wanted to do

that. Soon enough, he would help them understand Shakespeare's tragic and comic modes, his thoughts on how history worked, his absolutely shocking belief in love and art as secular redemptions. Indeed Franklin would overwhelm his students with all the academic jewels and insights he knew of.

“You see, the great Oxford dons argue that Shakespeare was the nexus of medieval and Renaissance thought, and that explains his signature universality,” he would say.

Indeed, when Franklin was done, his students would have met Shakespeare at all levels, to anyone's satisfaction. But first he would indeed start by telling them about a talented young man from Stratford who apparently very much wanted to make something of himself.

As he looked out on his group, as he scanned the faces at the tables, Franklin thought his students were granting him a reprieve, that their bodies had relaxed a little, their eyes had softened. And he felt good about that. He felt very good about what he was doing, as always, really. It was just the way he was. He would not back away from this fact. At least not yet. Nor would he back away from those other, personal matters beyond this class, which would confront him after everyone had left the classroom.

The fact of the universe is mutability, the Bard might well say. Everything changes, always. But Franklin, with modest pride, would confront that fact, too. After all, hadn't Jane Marks also phoned him a second time, only a few weeks later to say, that he was not to worry, that she had enjoyed what they had done, and that sometime she would begin her studies again?

Portfolio Assessment at The Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies

Rebecca Fraser, The Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies



Rebecca Fraser

Portfolios, portfolios – everywhere I looked were tilting stacks of portfolios. Some portfolios were neat and clean, others ragged. If you had ventured up to the sixth floor of 325

Hudson Street in March or June, you might have been surprised at the sight of a group of instructors drinking plenty of coffee and carefully making their way through the mountains of student work. Gathered around the table in our conference room, we mostly worked quietly with a focused respect for the student work; occasionally there would be an outburst of laughter and delight at a student's unique take on an assignment. What we encountered in our reading – abundant evidence of student thinking and learning and development – was as electrifying as it was daunting.

Some Background on The Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies

Due to the convictions of Harry Van Arsdale Jr., the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 3, is the only union in the country that requires its member apprentices to receive a minimum of an Associate in Science degree in labor studies as a requirement for becoming journeyman electricians. Local 3 apprentices make up the bulk of our student population. At The Van Arsdale Center we consider unions to be one of the few counterweights to the inequality in our society; given the shrinking union membership and assault on unions, our contribution at Van Arsdale takes on an added dimension. We infuse the content of each course with a working-class and labor presence as well as foster the critical and intellectual skills necessary for the development of engaged citizens and

labor activists and leaders. Additionally, we enact a student-centered, critical thinking-based pedagogy comprised of active learning practices, which includes required reading of books by some of the best writers and thinkers the culture has produced, as well as vigorous discussion and much informal/formal writing about that reading.

The Process

During the spring of 2005, The Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies undertook this project of collecting and assessing portfolios of all of our students at both midterm and semester's end. At midterm, we collected 603 portfolios, mostly from associate degree students enrolled in each of the eight courses we offer (College Writing; Information Resources and Technology; Global Civilization; U.S. History; Literature and Society; Class, Race and Gender; Labor and the Economy; and Occupational Safety and Health Administration: OSHA). A team of 10 writing instructors and coaches took 66 hours to read, assess, and comment briefly on these portfolios. At the end of the semester, we received portfolios not only from our associate degree students but also from our bachelor's degree students; this time we collected 975 portfolios. This reading, done by 15 faculty members, took 106 hours to complete.

We asked students to put all their work in the portfolios – informal writing, worksheets, formal papers (including drafts), responses to readings, etc. Consequently, the portfolios we received at the end of the semester were much thicker than those collected at midterm. We did a simple, holistic assessment – assigning each portfolio with a rating of “outstanding,” “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory.” The vast majority of portfolios received a satisfactory grade; an unsatisfactory was reserved for a portfolio especially thin or incomplete, while

an outstanding was assigned to particularly stellar work.

Why?

Why undertake such a huge project you might well ask – and why do this twice in a semester? The simplest way to answer those questions also is the most obvious way: it isn't (necessarily) that we are crazy; it is just that we believe in writing and in our students' ability to write with increasing power and clarity. Writing changes students' lives – it develops their reflective and analytic capabilities, provides them with an opportunity to make connections between their experiences and those they read and learn about in their courses, and ultimately gives them an edge in their lives as electricians, foremen, trade unionists and citizens. Writing is central to our curriculum.

Benefits for Students

These portfolios are required not as another hurdle for students to jump over (no matter what the students think), but as a way for us to support students in their writing. As academics, we all know just how difficult it can be to write a paper. We know that to write successfully we need to revise and edit; we know that running a draft by a colleague is extremely helpful. Asking students to compile their work into a folder affirms their experiences of a messy and complicated writing process and provides them an opportunity to show that process – idea development, analysis, exploration – to their instructors.

Further, asking students to create course portfolios gives them the chance to see just how much they have done across the semester. Many students express apprehension about the requirement, and consequently, spend extra time putting their work together with care and finding a sense of pride in their work. Putting a portfolio together heightens students' awareness of

an audience for their writing. One student told me that this new perspective helped him to see the weakness in his writing and motivated him to work harder the second half of the semester. His midterm portfolio received an unsatisfactory; his end-term portfolio received an outstanding. I wish you could see the look of satisfaction and pride on his face when he picked up his work.

Curricular Benefits

An additional benefit was that we got an inside view of how the curriculum we had developed was working, where it might be breaking down, and how it was being “delivered.” While we had little interest in using portfolios to assess our instructors, that was an unintended effect. What we were most interested in, however, was how our students were (or weren’t) interacting with the program. Peter Elbow and Pat Belanoff note that portfolio assessment “permits us to invade teachers’ classrooms” (27). Specifically, requiring portfolios forces instructors to require writing of their students. Since we have approximately 60 adjuncts teaching our courses, and since we have employed a shared syllabus in those courses, it is important that students are not only reading the same books but are engaged in similar assignments, both in quantity and in quality.

Some of our instructors feel this invasion more than others, and I think that this is a good thing. A certain amount of pull on a curriculum requires us to be reflective and critical of the syllabi and program we are creating and will be constantly re-creating. Elbow and Belanoff note that a portfolio system is working well when instructors “stop feeling they are ‘teaching a portfolio course’ and instead just feel they are teaching ‘their’ course – within its framework” (27). In a sense, in this process we invite our instructors to “invade” each other’s classes; reading a portfolio gives one a backdoor view into another’s teaching

practices. Admittedly, this is not always a comfortable process – it is, however, a hugely generative exercise.

In fact, there is almost no way to read a set of portfolios from another instructor’s class without getting insight into that instructor’s relationship to students, to

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course material, to the institution, as well as into that instructor’s pedagogy and praxis. The reading of portfolios automatically engenders thick and complex discussion about teaching and learning, about goals and expectations, about frustrations and successes.

One of the most striking moments of the process of the project occurred when an adjunct, who has been with us for more than 20 years, became frustrated with the lack of comments on student papers in one class. As he vented his frustration and his concern for students, a great discussion about teacher comments on papers was sparked. These conversations have led us to modify the reading of the portfolios this fall.

Looking Ahead

The discussions we had during the reading process were dynamic and full of possibility – and limited to our writing instructors and coaches. This fall, instructors within a particular course – Labor and the Economy for instance – will read one another’s student portfolios. We have faculty development meetings twice a semester, and one of our meetings will be dedicated to the reading and scoring of portfolios. I expect that this work will deepen the work we engage in with our students; I anticipate a healthy, vigorous dialogue about what to expect of our students’ writing, as well as how to respond to that writing. Spring semester 2005 was just a beginning; I am sure we all will be learning alongside of our students as we read portfolios in upcoming semesters.

(Note: Special thanks to Mike Merrill, Sharon Szymanski and Dan Katz for their help with the writing of this essay.)

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Mentor Notes (Prague, February 2005)

David Starr-Glass, Center for International Programs

He had fallen behind in his course assignments:
Too much work, or parties, I callously surmised.
No Sir – he always calls me Sir, capitalized – no Sir,
My sister, my younger sister of 20 years,
Has by now lost half her young body to cancer.
He told me this in the calm sterility of an e-mail.
I asked: Perhaps she wants me to pray for her?
Sir, she thanks you – she finds comfort in it.
I wrote in my notes: Mia, daughter of Ankitza.

This morning he sits across the table from me
Eyes lowered: respectful, red rimmed with tears.
Zdravo. Kako si? My Croatian is limited.
Shalom. He is as sensitive to linguistic difference
As to our shared commitment to communicate.

Sir, now she is in Vienna with specialists:
They say that the thing still grows inside her.
We sit silently beyond inconsequential speech
Recognizing our powerlessness to intervene,
Aware of shared compassion, shared humanity.

I rise and together we walk to the open door.
I can walk with him only so far, only to the door,
Not to where death may become an intimacy.
I am reluctant to leave him but can go no further.
His eyes are filled with tears and so are mine.
Beloved Lord, have compassion on Mia bat Ankitza.

She is so serious, when we meet, so preoccupied.
She says there will be problems with her work;
She doubts that she can finish by our deadlines.
I sense an unarticulated story between the words:
In Czech I ask: *Co se stalo?* What's the matter?

My mother she begins, my mother of fifty years,
Is now so very ill and I must care for her.

I ask: You think her illness will progress?
Yes, the cancer is free within her broken body
It will be a matter of a few terrifying months.
I write down on a card, Kristina daughter of Lucie.
We talk some more; tears begin to fill our eyes.
Moments of shared compassion, shared humanity.
Beloved Lord, have compassion on Kristina bat Lucie.

Students sit unassuming behind schedules and forms:
Fears and dreams often reflected in what they say,
Pain and joy cryptically embedded in their transcripts.
They sit and wait for these mysteries to be deciphered:
To be simply recognized, perhaps even to be shared.
Once I saw words and letters but missed the meaning.
Once I removed myself to a place of inner sterility:
Isolated, distanced from compassion and humanity.
It was my foolishness, my flickering fear, and frailty:
It was my loss and my students' loss as well.

Now I look behind the masking page,
To glimpse fear and uncertainty in lowered eyes,
To hear unvoiced joy and pain between the words,
To record a different understanding in my notes.

Beloved Lord, have compassion on all of us
Who meet together trying to co-create a novel space
In which to construct knowledge and review the self,
And find out not who we are but who we might be.

Note: Mia, daughter of Ankitza, and Kristina, daughter of Lucie, both passed away in the spring of 2005.

Mentoring: A Partnership in the Learning Process

Mindy Kronenberg, Long Island Center

There's a saying that defines a teacher's role as either that of a "sage on the stage or a guide on the side." For some, the traditional classroom setting leads to the temptation to play the pedantic soothsayer and hold court as the eager and willing throng listens and furiously scribbles page after page of inspired notes. Conversely, there are those in the teaching profession who coax their charges along, presenting information, posing questions, and providing clues with the aplomb of an illusionist, allowing students to discover the delight of critical assessment and revelation on their own.

At Empire State College, I have discovered a balance between these two forms of pedagogy, borrowing from each for both the independent and study group modes. In one-to-one mentoring, I find an opportunity for building a Socratic dialogue, a give-and-take that evolves as my student gains momentum and I can pull back and move from instigator to involved listener. In study groups, I can unleash ideas and open a discussion that allows individual students a personal journey while engaging in a larger, communal setting.

After teaching adults for over 20 years (nine of those at this college), I have become a staunch advocate of the mentor/student dynamic and the opportunity it provides for learners on both sides of the "podium." It's a stylistic distinction that has made a marked difference in how our students come to understand the importance of their own role in the process of adult learning. Its success is evident in the body language of those in independent study who start out hunched or folded in their chairs and then take to leaning over my desk to share their responses and assignments with determined exuberance. The positive forces of empathetic and rigorous involvement on the part of a mentor can result in the glow of recognition in the faces of students sitting together in a classroom and the upward



Mindy Kronenberg

thrust of an eager hand that signals an inspired realization.

While distance learning and cross registration are among the necessary and productive elements of our institution, mentoring provides the support and intensive partnership that builds a foundation for so many of our students. Mentoring creates a touchstone, for both students and faculty, and provides an opportunity for thoughtful exchanges that can guide the student through a seemingly nebulous system.

When I meet with students for the first time, I like to ask questions about who they are, personally, and how they see themselves (academically, professionally) in the larger construct of Empire State College. I hope to engage them to breakdown any barriers or dispel any myths they might have and, most of all, to provide information that will ease their journey. Person to person, I remind them that they are not expected to know everything up front, that even those with prior college experience need time to acclimate themselves to the independent study mode, and that any adult with a full life and work schedule will experience challenges in balancing academic and domestic responsibilities.

By getting to know my mentees as individuals, and not simply as students, I can better gauge how to lead them to the understanding that their life learning is relevant to what they will pursue in their degree programs. As a writing and literature mentor, I can tie in the scope of their experience to writing assignments and give them a chance to express views on a variety of subjects, including their perceived place in the world. I can bring their attention to a vast canon of literature, produced by human beings at various points in history in numerous contexts, and share how the stories, poems and novels we come to value will have something relevant to convey about ourselves. At the end of a study, when it comes time for my students to provide a self-reflective essay on what they've learned, I marvel at the critical concepts they have absorbed and how they have come to value their own ability to digest, assess, and (especially) enjoy the skills they are eager to reapply.

The concept of being "educated" can be more complex and far-reaching than the discipline and training achieved. We ask our students to consider what education means to them and often forget its nuances and ultimate impact in the equation of the learning process. The late mathematician and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead pointed out that "... students are alive, and the purpose of education is to stimulate and guide their self-development" (v from the Preface). He protested "inert ideas," and stipulated that rote learning and uninspired academic regiment undermines the spirit and makes for a stale intellect, where true education needs challenge and diversity: "The justification for a university is that it preserves the connection between knowledge and the zest for life, by uniting the young and the old in the imaginative consideration of learning ... the task of a university is to weld together imagination and experience" (93).

At Empire State College, we can build a special dynamic with our students, keep them engaged and involved throughout the entire matriculation process, and, hopefully, never take for granted how we, as mentors, can also learn and be guided by those we guide.

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“Beyond either relativism or the search for absolutes, learning can be practiced as a form of spirituality through a lifetime. We started from participant observation and the necessity for improvisation, asserting the need to act and interact with others without complete understanding, learning along the way, and we argued that improvisation can be both creative and responsible. We have explored ways of embracing myths and metaphors and multiple layers of truths, education through lessons that are different at every encounter. The self is constructed from continuing uncertainty, but it can include or reflect a community or even the entire biosphere, can be both fluid and stable, can be fulfilled in learning rather than in control.”

Mary Catherine Bateson, *Peripheral Visions: Learning Along the Way*. New York: Harper Collins, 1994) (234-5)

Long Distance between Reality and the Ideal

John J. Neumaier, Professor Emeritus, Metropolitan Center

Note: The following essay was written by John Neumaier and published in the Daily Freeman, Kingston, N.Y. on Sunday, September 4, 2005. John Neumaier was president of SUNY New Paltz from 1968 - 72 and of Moorhead (Minn.) State University from 1958 - 68. He is professor emeritus of Empire State College. Thanks to John for permission to include this essay in All About Mentoring.

During the Christmas season, the longing for a better world is routinely expressed by the wish for “peace on earth and good will toward men.” If we add “and women,” it is indeed a goal worthy of a universal “Amen” (whatever one’s religious or ethical credo).

At the same time, this saying should remind us of the chasm between the real world we live in and the conception of a more ideal future world. Not that everyone reacts to “peace and good will” in the same way. For some it’s just a phrase repeated mechanically, in conformity with a long-established tradition; critics think of it as a mere cliché to which most give only lip service. Others think of the maxim as admirable but unrealistic – how could there possibly be a world without war, without chauvinist nationalism, without racism, sexism, oppression, poverty, and the economic misery which characterizes the lives and causes the deaths of so many human beings? And yes, for some the precept still represents a genuine hope for a better world that is well worth the struggle.

To me it seems important to examine these diverse views of present and prospective social reality as well as of the changes that might move us toward a more ideal future. Such an examination also must deal with the question of how our varying conceptions of the real and the ideal are related, indeed interconnected, and with the even more difficult question of how humankind could

make the transition from what is, to what we wish it to be.

Obviously, constructive deliberation about these complex questions presents a formidable challenge. It calls not only for a critical analysis of the current state of the world. It also requires imaginative, yet realistic, exploration and discussion of what we mean when we talk about an ideal, or better world. And inevitably, it means facing up to the almost innumerable obstacles which need to be overcome in such a quest. Needless to say, paramount among these obstacles are the social forces which are ever ready to use the considerable power at their disposal in defense of what they consider to be their interests.

And the ways in which the existing social forces and groupings, intentionally or otherwise, impact the environment, positively or negatively, not only affect the shape of future social reality, but could jeopardize the very existence of the human and other species.

Much can be learned from previous writings, efforts, and past social changes and transformations over the centuries. One key lesson is that without the informed political participation of a majority, radical social change is likely to end up in authoritarian rule (or worse), rather than in a democratic



Sally and John Neumaier

society. Another is that it is naive to lay out a detailed prescriptive blueprint; obviously we cannot know what daily life will be like in coming centuries.

For the here and now of the first decade of the 21st century, the overall long term human prospect for an end to war, poverty and gross injustice, indeed for the very survival of humanity, is linked to short-term actions, particularly those taken by the most powerful nation, which is currently the United States. And not only just by its government, but by its people. Errors and missteps along the way are inevitable but must not discourage the continuing fight for peace and social justice. The very existence of a world-wide peace movement, so massively manifested at the start of the war initiated by the U.S. and British governments against Iraq, demonstrates that today’s social reality is not without positive features.

“Social reality,” as used here, refers to the existing political, economic, legal, cultural and other institutional structures, and to the corresponding social conditions in which people live, and over which a state’s governing forces and dominant elites have such a strong influence. Thus, social reality includes the “givens” of class differentiation, income levels, standards of living, ideologies, religions, political party structures, as well as a government’s foreign relations.

The latter – diplomatic, military and commercial – are closely linked to domestic policies. The dynamic interrelationship and interplay between all these components of a society also apply to its corporate, labor, educational, health, judicial, police, prison, and other public and private establishments as well as individuals.

It must not be assumed that the formation of social reality is confined to human forces alone. Instead, its complex sources also include the all-important nonhuman forces of nature. For without the evolving natural environment neither human life nor social civilization would have been possible on our planet. Hence the interaction of humans and the natural environment is an essential component of social reality. And the ways in which the existing social forces and groupings, intentionally or otherwise, impact the environment, positively or negatively, not only affect the shape of future social reality, but could jeopardize the very existence of the human and other species.

The relationship between social reality and social ideals – that is, between what people take for granted and what people might hope and struggle for – raises many questions. For example:

- How do people form their views about social reality, here and abroad? What factors, such as background, schooling, sources of information, etc., have influenced their opinions?
- How is one's understanding or acceptance of "reality" related to one's ideas about the future, that is, does a person's outlook allow for a more humane world or is such a thought viewed as mere utopian fantasy?
- Are there short-term actions which are not only connected to, nay a prerequisite for, the long-term prospects for a better world, for example, participating in peace demonstrations, like the one held on September 24 in Washington, D.C.?
- What are the causes of wars and terrorism and how can we more effectively expose and oppose their "reality"?
- How can we bridge the abyss between the rhetoric of freedom and its actual practice? While freedom of speech is guaranteed in our constitution, the use of it is severely constrained by such factors as access to the mass communications media (increasingly the domain of corporate monopolies

and their advertisers), and by the prevailing ideological indoctrination and propaganda which discourages discussion of ideas considered subversive by, and threatening to, the powers that be.

- And finally there's the crucial question of how working people – whether employed or unemployed, wage-workers or self-employed in small businesses – can find the necessary information, adequate educational preparation, and sufficient time, to effectively share in making decisions affecting their commonwealth?

Many other questions and issues relating to this topic need broad and thorough discussion and debate if democracy and planning for the future is to be at the service of the people, instead of being a tool of manipulation and dominance by an oligarchy.

"When structures are in flux but ideas are stable, there is room for error. When ideas are in flux but structures are stable, there is room for confusion. But when both ideas and structures are in flux at the same time, error and confusion are of the order of the day."

Joan Chittister, *The Way We Were: A Story of Conversion and Renewal*. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2005) (69)

Teaching, Advising and Mentoring M.A.T. Students with Technology: Reflections on the 2005 Conference on Instructional Technologies

Ellen Lunts, Center for Graduate Programs

Background

I am proud to be a faculty member of the new Empire State College Master of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.) program. Our alternative teacher education program prepares adult career changers for a secondary school teacher career. They will become teachers in high-need subject areas – Math, Science, Spanish, French, English Language Arts and Social Studies – in urban and other high-need schools. All of our teacher candidates (TCs) already have undergraduate degrees and some have master’s and other advanced degrees. Like students in other graduate programs, our M.A.T. students have an academic advisor, an M.A.T. faculty member (usually from their local Empire State College center) who guides them during their three years in the program.¹

In our program, the term “mentor” is reserved for experienced school district



Ellen Lunts

teachers who support our TCs during year two and year three when they are employed as full-time probationary teachers in one of our partner school districts. The two-year long mentoring of all beginning teachers is a new mandate by the New York State Education Department. In addition to being mentored by experienced schoolteachers, our TCs also receive extensive instructional and mentoring support from their M.A.T. academic advisors and content faculty. In fact, Mentored Teaching is one of the two courses our TCs take during the fall and spring terms in years two and three. In these Mentored Teaching courses, teaching takes the shape of facilitating TCs’ reflections on their teaching, coordinating their interactions with mentors and each other and supporting their professional growth. Thus, teaching, advising and mentoring are overlapping activities, in which M.A.T. faculty are involved.

One major feature of our program is the integration of strong mentoring support – which is traditional for all Empire State College programs – into our teaching, advising and teaching supervision. Because our curriculum is designed to meet New York state mandates, our TCs do not have flexibility to design their program of study or degree plan that is characteristic of other programs at the college. However, we still strive to meet our adult learners’ needs and interests in our teaching, advising and mentoring. In fact, each M.A.T. faculty attended a New Mentor Workshop along with other newly hired Empire State College faculty, and many of us have already applied the knowledge that we acquired in this workshop in teaching individual tutorials or small group studies of undergraduate students. Therefore, these three terms – “teaching,” “advising” and “mentoring” – are very meaningful to us.

Another major characteristic of our program is that all our courses are in CourseSpace and delivered either entirely

online or as hybrid courses (courses that require substantial online participation as well as participation in six or seven face-to-face group meetings). In addition to teaching, we use this online environment for communication among faculty, among TCs, and among faculty and TCs, and for our TCs to develop their electronic teaching portfolios and professional learning plans. We also continue to build and expand our Urban Teachers CommunitySpace, an interactive web site serving as an instructional resource depository and supporting one-to-one mentoring between our TCs and their school mentors. The portal is also intended to support “buddying” among our second and first year TCs and among third and second year TCs.²

Online teaching is a big part of our program, but it is not the only reason why we are committed to integrating various computer technologies in our teaching. As our goal is to prepare highly qualified teachers, in addition to subject-area mastery and classroom pedagogy, our TCs must demonstrate mastery in using various technologies in their own teaching and learning. We do not have a stand-alone educational technology course; instead, technology objectives are integrated into each of our courses. Moreover, we model the use of technology in our own teaching whether it is online or in our face-to-face classes.

Last but not the least, the reason for me to stay at the forefront of using various educational technologies is that educational technology is one of three areas of my preparation. (My other two areas of expertise are secondary math education and parental and community involvement in education.) When it comes to learning and integrating new technologies, my M.A.T. colleague from the Capitol Region, Eileen O’Connor, and I are at the vanguard in our program. It is no wonder why I am

interested in technology-related conferences, especially those that also focus on pedagogy.

“Fitting the Pieces Together: Pedagogy, Technology and Learning,” Conference on Instructional Technologies 2005 at SUNY Binghamton (May 23 - 26, 2005)

In December 2004, I saw a flyer announcing a call for papers to the Conference on Instructional Technologies (CIT) 2005. Our M.A.T. program is unique in design and is technology rich. We have a lot to build and learn, but we already have some data and experiences to share. Thus, I saw the conference as an opportunity to learn and share my experiences using technology in the M.A.T. program with colleagues from other State University of New York institutions. Another goal was public relations: M.A.T. faculty aim at increasing the visibility of the our M.A.T. program, and the college in large, among other SUNY colleges, particularly those with teacher education programs.

I proposed two different paper presentations: “Faculty Use of Technology as a Tool for Instructional Collaboration” and “Empire State College Alternative Teacher Education Program: Preparing Adults with Technology.” Both papers were to be co-presented with my colleague, Eileen O’Connor. We wrote abstracts for the two papers and submitted them electronically for consideration. Simultaneously, each of us applied for a United University Professions (UUP) individual award to fund our travel and lodging. Soon after, we were notified about the proposals’ acceptance and being awarded UUP money. I will not describe the content of these presentations, as we plan to have both papers published. In fact, one paper is already in review in *Academic Exchange Quarterly*. What I will share in this paper are my impressions about the conference, including what I have learned.

Reflections on the Conference

I found most of the presentations to be directly related to various aspects of teaching, advising and mentoring. I list some of the presentation titles in the various tracks to illustrate the variety of presentations in each of the eight concurrent sessions.³ It was difficult to choose which

presentations were the most worthwhile to attend.

1. Preparing Tomorrow’s Teachers with Technology (PT3)

- Creating an On-Demand Video Library for Faculty and Staff (Session 2)
- Using Videos in PowerPoint Presentation and Web Delivery (Session 2)
- SLN MID Show and Tell: Strategies for Teaching Online that Work! (Session 3)
- Why and How to be a MERLOT Peer Reviewer (Session 7)

2. Learning Outcomes and Assessment: Raising the Bar with Technology

- Delivering Visual Mathematics Online (Session 1)
- Students’ Learning Styles and Their Preferences for Online Instructional Methods (Session 2)
- Lessons Learned in Producing Interactive Spreadsheets to Provide Immediate Feedback for Homework (Session 4)
- Rubrics in the Curriculum (Session 5)
- Using Electronic Portfolios for Assessment, Learning, Reflection, and Achievement (Session 6)

3. Emerging Technologies

- Academic Web Site Trends: The Results of Three Studies (Session 1)
- Integration of Available and New Technologies to Raise Student Understanding and Engagement (Session 1)
- How to Use Free Software, such as MS MovieMaker, to Create a Video Clip (Session 2)
- Lectures with Video and HTML PowerPoint – Internet-Ready Minutes After Completed Lecture (Session 2)
- Testing and Assessment Technology in Math and Science: Maple TA (Session 6) Ê

4. Instructional Partnerships

- Collaborative Approach to Hybrid Course Conversions (Session 6)

- Creating and Sustaining Problem-based Partnerships among Graduate, Undergraduate, and K-12 Learners (Session 7)

5. Current Grant Projects and Funding Opportunities

- Applying for a FACT COICID Grant – Conferences on Computing in (or across) the Disciplines (Session 2)

6. Faculty Development: New Approaches and Opportunities

- Methods of Using Technology to Promote Faculty Communication (Session 2)
- Folk-LOR: Learning Object Repository (Session 7)

7. Issues in Technology and Education

- Creative Use of Technology in Online Education (Session 4)
- Hybrids: The Best of Both Worlds or the Worst? (Session 5)
- Is PowerPoint Really Evil? (Session 9)

In addition to SUNY faculty and staff presentations, there were a number of vendors – including Desire2Learn, Turning Technologies, Apple Computers, Management Systems, PalmOne, Blackboard, MapleSoft, Xerox, Tequipment (SMART Board Interactive White Boards), Mititab and Horizon Wimba – demonstrating and presenting their products at the conference. Ê

In my evaluation report to the UUP Joint Labor-Management committee, I wrote that I was able to accomplish all three goals I set for this conference: I learned a lot, was able to share my knowledge and experience, and presented our program and the college at large. There was, however, one more unexpected benefit from attending this conference. At the conference, I had an opportunity to interact with a number of Empire State College colleagues, including those from the Center for Distance Learning and the Center for Learning and Technology.

In describing how the activity – attendance and presentation at the CIT 2005 conference, in my case – contributed to my job, I wrote that I found it supportive of all five SUNY criteria for faculty review and promotion:

- *Mastery of Subject Matter.* In particular, I learned about new computer technologies, such as student response/assessment software and The Maple T.A. software for math and science.
- *Effectiveness of Teaching.* Among the presentations I attended were the following: SLN MID Show and Tell: Strategies for Teaching Online that Work! Online Modules as Learning Objects: Evidence of Impact, E-folios in SUNY Oswego's Teacher Preparation Program, Supporting Students through Adaptive Technology on a College Campus, Rubrics in the Curriculum, Folk-LOR: Rethinking the Organization of the Learning Object Repository.
- *Scholarly Ability.* Presentations at conferences and published articles demonstrate my scholarly ability. After attending, "Why and How to be a MERLOT Peer Reviewer," I have

become interested in this project and may opt for becoming a reviewer.

- *Effectiveness of University Service.* I am going to share the knowledge that I gained with my colleagues.⁴
- *Continuing Growth.* I have always been interested in learning more about instructional design. This conference gave me an opportunity to expand my knowledge in this area.

Conclusion

In summary, I really enjoyed this conference and I wrote this paper to make other faculty aware of this annual conference at which they should consider presenting. I hope to see many more of my colleagues at the CIT 2006 conference, which will be held May 30 - June 2 at SUNY Fredonia.⁵ I will be there!

Notes

- ¹ More information about our program, including admission requirements and curriculum structure, can be found at <http://www.esc.edu/matinfo>.
- ² In addition to being good teachers, advisors and mentors to our TCs, our faculty aim at passing best mentoring traditions onto them. Our ultimate goal is to see our TCs become good teachers as well as good mentors to other beginning teachers.
- ³ The total number of conference sessions was nine. I could not attend presentations scheduled for Session 8, since this was a session I was scheduled to present.
- ⁴ This paper fulfills my promise to share with others what I have learned at the conference.
- ⁵ More information about the conference can be found at www.CIT.suny.edu.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank M.A.T. Mentor Richard Iuli for his very helpful comments on this paper.

"The defining interaction of Internet culture lies not in the interface between the user and the computer, but rather in that between the user and the collective imagination of the vast virtual audience to whom one submits an endless succession of enticing, exasperating, evocative figments of one's being."

David Porter, "Introduction," in *Internet Culture*, ed. D. Porter (London: Routledge, 1997), xiii. (Quoted in R. Voithofer, "Nomadic Epistemologies and Performative Pedagogies," *Educational Theory* 52 (4) p 491.)

In Memoriam, Catherine Tracey

Marianne Arieux, Hudson Valley Center

Catherine Tracey was my student. She came to Empire State College in 2000 to pursue a bachelor's degree. Catherine had received an A.A.S. degree in early childhood education from Westchester Community College. In so doing, she had studied college math as a nonmatriculated student with Jay Gilbert, hence learned about Empire State College. Catherine was working as a physical therapist aide at Westchester Medical Center on variable shifts. She elected to study at Empire State College because she could work while continuing her education. Catherine was assigned to me. Although Catherine was to engage in several tutorials with me, it was in our working together in educational planning that our relationship, friendship and our mutual admiration grew. This memorial is a story of our relationship as mentor and student.

I met Catherine at a particular moment in my development as a mentor. I was still learning about mentoring, not so much the everyday functioning, which was no longer so new, but the philosophy that drove the model. Just as she was in a pivotal point in her development and education, so was I. Just as mentoring offers possibilities for students beyond that ever available in traditional educational programs, it offers parallel potential growth for practitioners. I was drawn to go beyond my discipline, to become informed about adult education and learning.

This intellectual expansion was eased by the inclusion of developmental theory in most theories of adult learning and education – developmental theory that was within the tradition of my own study, i.e., the work of Vygotsky and his interpreters. In addition, I had been a graduate student when Sylvia Scribner, a preeminent researcher of adult

cognitive development and Vygotskian scholar, joined the faculty. Although I studied development during childhood, I was showered with information from her work. Fellow classmates had come to CUNY explicitly to study with her. Friends were researching adult memory development in waitressing, in bartending. Sylvia was on a mission to discover how adult cognition developed, and she looked to the contexts of adults' work, in their "experiential learning" in the language more familiar to us at Empire State College. Elana Michelson and Xenia Coulter referenced Sylvia's work in an All College presentation. But I digress.

At the time I met Catherine, I was trying to further "break the code" of mentoring, to discover how adult learning was affected by this method. I knew one nucleus of that information lay in processes of educational planning. And in this process, Catherine presented a puzzle. She had earned credits through her A.A.S. study. She seemed a very accomplished woman, having migrated from the Caribbean as an adult working full time, and having raised a family. I just knew that she had significant prior learning that could be evaluated for college credit. I had learned from my colleague Lois Muzio that when designed correctly, degree programs at Empire State College "should look like the student." That was a criterion I aimed to meet. Catherine was like many of my students: a human service worker, in this case in the health science area, who was in a low paying job, ostensibly due to educational deficiencies, but implicitly because she was Black and willing to work in unskilled jobs – for low wages without complaint. I had taught for years at a historically Black college and knew the subtle and not so subtle ways women of color were ushered into corridors leading to lower level jobs, denying their intellect and ability. I also had experience with some of the consequences of such oppressive experiences, the silenced self



– the cautious display of abilities in unsafe, i.e., educational, contexts.

In spite of this awareness and belief in the capacity of recognition to overcome reluctance, I was not successful at getting Catherine to present herself as a woman with intellectual accomplishments worthy of evaluation for college credit. I did not know how to break through the silenced voice I hypothesized was keeping her from elaborating her experiential learning. In the various meetings about educational planning over a year or more, I would always ask, “Is there anything you have learned or know from your experiences that might be equivalent to college level learning?” She would always demure and say, “No, I know nothing.”

In front of me sat a woman who had come from Jamaica, brought her children here, worked in health care and was an active member of her church. She was loving, a pleasure to be with, and a willing and insightful student, but absolutely impervious to my insistence that she had become knowledgeable about something or other during these past years in her every day goings-on in the world. I, who not only studied about authorial voice, but also thought myself somewhat skilled in eliciting this voice, was stumped! Then one day at our nth meeting, I said once again, feeling more like a directive than a collaborative educator: “Isn’t there *anything* you’ve learned over the course of your work with patients or as a single parent mother that you think might be equal to college level learning?” And suddenly, Catherine started to talk.

I quickly took notes and remember thinking as I did that what Catherine knew could have met most of the state’s general education requirements. She was an elder in her church, had studied the *Bible* and scriptures extensively and, for years, had taught and provided counseling for members of her church in crisis. She also had a sophisticated understanding of racism, her analysis illustrating nuances in discrimination in her homeland and in the United States. And she had become an expert seamstress while a textile worker in Jamaica. In contrast, the lack of college level knowledge for her health care work was

surprising. Since this is a familiar area for me, I questioned her further. I was stunned to learn how such minimal information was provided to her in her work as a physical therapy aide. My background in nursing knew that this was impossible. As an aide, she would have the most intimate relationships with the patients. As such, she should have had access to medical-nursing information that would have both informed her care and amplified her knowledge. Instead, in the absence of this information, she employed her considerable interpersonal and counseling skills to assist her patients. Her discussion of patient care functioned as mini-case studies, illustrating her ability to provide care and promote healing from her own learning. Catherine Tracey had learned from her work with people who were hurting. She had discovered how to adjust her activities in response to them, in order that they would feel better physically and emotionally become better able to cope with the illnesses disabling them.

Because I, as a mentor with an interest in voice (as a discourse phenomenon, not vocal talent), was so intrigued with the breaking of her silence, I asked Catherine why this had occurred. She attributed it to my persistence. Her words were memorable and became part of her degree rationale: “Nobody ever asked me about myself. You kept asking me and I became an open book.” I was as stupefied by her explanation as I had been by her silence. I was trying to learn why and how mentoring worked, and could not and still do not know why my attitude of persistent questioning worked when it worked. I have to believe it was like a mutual epiphany. Perhaps Catherine and I were already on our way to an educational collaboration, but this clearly transformed our relationship. Catherine was and became a student that made mentoring the interpersonal as well as intellectual experience it can be. While over time we would have intellectual disagreements, we had only one personal one. I am allergic to perfume and Catherine preferred strong scents. I asked if she could not wear perfume, and to the degree that she remembered, she did – but not always. That now stands as a cherished memory of her – a foible of our relationship.

Catherine’s work with patients in recovery from strokes and other physical mobility ailments, and her work with families in crisis from her church made her want to study counseling. We developed a degree program in counseling, with prior learning assessed from her *Bible* study, work as an elder-manager of the church, Christian counseling, sewing and her understanding of racial discrimination. Catherine could only enroll for 8 credits at a time. Since money was not in great supply, she would often pace her enrollments around paychecks. We talked about her need to give to herself as she was generous to others, but it was not of her nature to put herself before those who relied upon her – her children (albeit grown) or community members. There were times when her enrollments had to be extended, although she carefully shielded me from the reasons, perhaps knowing I would disapprove of her not placing importance on herself. I knew Catherine, but as a student. She was not given to revealing about herself.

Academic education was not always easy for Catherine although she was a very bright woman. She had difficulty with the “language,” a particular kind of difficulty with which I have considerable experience and intrigue. I have known a number of students who floundered with academic language while adeptly conveying meanings. Catherine’s words did not readily fall into the patterns of standard American English, thus detracting from her written presentations. This was in sharp contrast to the sophisticated understanding she exhibited. One day in a two-person group study of personality, Catherine used a metaphor that so aptly captured a concept, the other student and I were uniformly in awe. In one of her last studies, counseling theories, her insights and ability to imagine counseling dilemmas showed an empathic understanding worthy of envy. Catherine had also faltered at learning computer applications; mostly I believe because she felt there was little pragmatic value to the study and had other things more crucial to learn. But she also possessed an ability to persist, enabling her to conquer whatever internal barrier was preventing her completion of that study. Catherine would do things I recommended academically, but

with less enthusiasm – a small triumph of resistance that I treasure.

Because I believed money a deterrent to her progress, I recommended Catherine for the Beldotti Scholarship based on her work with families in crisis. Then suddenly things took a different turn. Catherine was unexpectedly diagnosed with breast cancer that required immediate surgery with follow-up chemical and radiological treatments. She was surprised because her consistent screening practices were proven ineffective. The surgery went well, but the follow-up treatments bordered on intolerable. I supported her need for continued care for the sake of her cure. She continued, but all her energy was being tapped. She was demoralized and I knew she felt unable to continue her study. Fortunately about this time, Catherine received the Beldotti Scholarship. In her carefully constructed acceptance letter, Catherine wrote that she had been at the point of giving up on college, not seeing any way she could continue to concentrate on her studies due to her life-threatening disease, but the scholarship provided the necessary boost, permitting her to continue. This was indeed the case.

Catherine recovered sufficiently from the cancer and therapies to be able to complete most of her studies. The cancer was no longer present, but a side effect of the treatments was impeded use of her right arm, sufficient for her to be assessed as temporarily unable to work. For the first time, she was able to participate in evening group studies, which she enjoyed. Her health problems though, had changed her career plans. She no longer thought she would attend graduate school in social work, but instead would continue to do counseling as a volunteer. Through her contract studies, Catherine had developed an interest in battered women's syndrome. She wanted to volunteer to work with that group as well as her church community. Catherine wanted to help families, an impulse I only fully understood later. She was in her final enrollment, eagerly anticipating graduation – the announced achievement of a bachelor's degree and realization of a dream nourished since childhood.

One day during the week prior to graduation I got notice of several calls from her. The urgency of the support staff, all who knew her, made me frantic. I feared something terrible had happened – perhaps the cancer had unaccountably returned. When I phoned her home, I was told she was too ill to speak on the phone. Finally I was able to speak with her. Catherine had been ill and discharged from the hospital, apparently too soon, and now was re-hospitalized for complications from asthma. She wanted me to know what had happened. I knew how much graduation meant to her. I told her to come if she could, and if it were too difficult, not sit on the stage but in the front row of the audience. I would help her up the steps if necessary, to receive the degree she had so longed for. I comforted her by saying if she didn't make it this year, she could attend next year.

Catherine did not make it to graduation, and we did not hear further from her. I thought about her, but the demands of work didn't leave much time to consider what to do. I thought I would hear from her when she felt better and judged that I shouldn't call because she needed to focus on healing. Then on Monday, June 20th, a call went to Joni Altman from Catherine's daughter, asking us to send her degree to a different address because she had passed away. I involuntarily bent over with the force of that blow. I couldn't believe it. It seemed incredibly unfair. This woman with so much to offer, so willing to offer herself and her abilities to help others, at the apex of a triumph, would not be able to realize her accomplishment. Not to mention my own loss. I was dreading her departure from the college just as she was – she planned to come back and do a writing course, just for herself she said – so she could learn how to write better.

I immediately called her daughter who informed me of the funeral service where people would speak for her. I spontaneously said I would like to come and say something. In the moment, I felt the need to recognize her educational accomplishments in whatever way I could. All viewing, funeral and burial services were to be held in her church, her daughter said: "We think that is the way she would have wanted it."

I had never heard of a viewing outside of a funeral home.

As the day came and as I reflected on my impetuosity, I became hesitant to go and speak. Perhaps it was impertinent; perhaps it would be better to express my condolences to her family more quietly. It took some doing to find the church. I thought I had arrived during the last part of the funeral services after which I planned to quietly speak to the family. But I was wrong. And for all those who believe as Catherine did, that there are unseen powers that guide us spiritually, this is a testament to their beliefs. I was early for the service.

Catherine's funeral service was called a HomeGoing Ceremony, a joyous ushering in of the spirit into the afterlife. Being from New Orleans, I knew of jazz funerals and, of course, I knew of the beliefs that passing away is a journey to a better place, joining God in reward, going to a place where there is no longer any suffering or pain. But I had never attended a Pentecostal church ceremony. When I arrived at the modest building that housed the church, I was brought to the family and her daughter told me that I was on the program. I was mortified. It said "School Mentor." I deferred. I felt I had no right in this place that was not mine. This was Catherine's sacred community that I had known about only as parsed through discussion and essay. I was just a teacher, someone who knew her as a student. Seeing my hesitance, her daughter still insisted I sit next to her "so," as she put it, "you won't *not* do it."

I settled back to have a remarkable experience. I was immediately impressed with the music. There was a three-piece trio including a huge keyboard and microphones. Videotaping had been arranged. The church was filled with parishioners. Everyone was dressed beautifully. I wished I had dressed up – broken with my cultural boundaries of restrained black mourning clothes. We were here to mourn and rejoice simultaneously, and people were dressed accordingly. The coffin was open. Catherine lay in a beautiful ornate gold throne as it were, dressed and adorned all in white with only her face exposed. The service informally began with the pastor notifying the congregation

of the limited time for viewing: “Anyone who wants to see her for the first or even second and third time needs to come up in the next 15 minutes.” A few late mourners walked up as the house began to sing. The cover of the coffin was slowly lowered. The music and song continued. It was upbeat, dancing music. Ushers began seating various groups, the choirs, the Ladies Society, etc. Then the music changed and a procession of a dozen men and women walked up the aisle onto the dais. The pastor was the only one in a robe. I would learn that the bishops of her church, state and regional, were in attendance, as well as a prominent woman preacher.

I began to learn how very important a person Catherine was in this community. She had talked about her work as an elder in her church, but not of her uniqueness, although, from our many discussions about the status of women, I knew she was the only woman elder. But the version of her life that I knew was attenuated by the lens of education. As I participated in this ceremony, I came to know again about different identities. Here was a woman, who, at our college, was one of many coming to get a degree, but in her community she was so respected and revered that bishops attended her funeral. That dichotomy was striking. As I mourned this woman who had touched my heart as I had hers, I sat in her church and learned much about who she was. It led me to a new awareness about education and its vicissitudes, even in an institution as rebellious about making people into traditional students as Empire State College. It is why I love this college – that not only could someone so special in her community be my student, but that her other identity, albeit not totally known, would be respected and considered important.

The ceremony continued. I learned how much Catherine had meant and given to this church community. I wondered whether we had gone any further than the very tip of the iceberg of her knowledge in those credit by evaluations. She had been one of the founders of the church, instrumental in the women’s group, in the youth groups, as well as in the everyday management of the community. This had begun as a smaller church and now was in a transitional

building, hoping to raise enough money to build a “real church” next. She was loved as well as respected. Members from each of the groups that Catherine had formed or been instrumental in supporting, gave a short speech as did members of her family. One granddaughter became tearful toward the end of a song she was singing for Catherine. Her son-in-law spoke about her spiritual forcefulness. A dear friend and fellow church colleague sang a song he composed for her. The choirs sang. And then there was time for the tributes. I had been listening, so overcome with sadness, I was afraid I was not going to be able to speak.

I gathered tissues on the way to the podium and began my tribute. With voice quavering, I got through enough to say who Catherine was in the context of her being a student. Catherine had been applauded for her courage, her persistence, her devotion, her love of her church and people. I said she was certainly courageous and determined. But most of all I remarked on her compassion, noting her recent work on battered women’s syndrome, and her insights that were always embedded in a depth of compassion most of us only wish for. Her pastor later was thankful for my words as “external witness” to the community’s knowledge of Catherine. Her goodness had been noticed and certainly was evident in her work at Empire State College, but I learned it was a goodness that was notable for acceptance of others’ foibles. It is a tough passing!

As the ceremony was concluding, I realized several things that shed light on my experiences with Catherine. I felt she was lucky to have a church that promoted love and inclusion – where emotions and passions were understood and honored. I now understood her own passion for working with families in ways she would probably not have been able to articulate. I learned that she had come to the U.S., first with only some of her children, worked and sent money home. Finally, she was able to have all five children here. Catherine had promised to dedicate her life to God if all could get green cards and remain with her. That happened and she spent 22 years building a church. I realized how important families were to her, not only through her work, which had been evidenced,

but subjectively. And I learned about her writing. Most of the time, Catherine wrote as she thought – through the languages of scripture and *Bible*, in stories and parables, and hence in metaphors. I understood why her writing made sense although often failed the academic ruler. The concepts were there, the meanings understood. As I listened to her pastor give a moving sermon whose theme was inclusion, I was reminded of Joan Conolly’s work on oral traditions. Joan, a professor in South Africa, argues that one ought not inflict the constraints of a written tradition on knowledge that is orally produced and reproduced. As the pastor used repetitions, tonal shifts, call and response to accent ideas, I wondered if his words would fit the mnemonic patterns Joan extracted from Marcel Jousse’s work that shows how oral passages of great lengths were remembered.

I have loved being a mentor at Empire State College, in part because of the wealth of experience this college permits: To have and be able to know students who themselves come with such bounty, students who give us their trust, their knowledge and their profound understandings of life and love, and hope we can help them shift and mold this, adding and subtracting, into something suitable to academic requirements. The gift of this time-taking and laborious process is moments like this when my student, even in death, teaches her teacher.

**

I wrote the following contract evaluation for her Catherine Tracey’s final study and shared it with Alan Mandell who asked to include it here. My colleague Rhoda Miller told me that in the past, there were many college discussions about the audience for narrative evaluations – student, other mentors and/or outsiders, such as graduate school officers. This evaluation, I realized, was written for Catherine’s family – the only people who would be reading it. Obviously, it would read very differently had she not passed away, but whether that would have been more reflective of her work, I am not sure.

**

Contract Evaluation, Ms. Catherine Tracey

Ms. Tracey wanted to augment her considerable experiential learning in working with families by becoming familiar with the theories and research about family structure and function. Since Ms. Tracey had become interested in battered women's syndrome during earlier studies and planned to pursue counseling with this population following graduation, she planned to volunteer at one of the safe houses and use her experience as clinical material. Ms. Tracey was unable to enact this plan, as the need for their protection precluded her access. Instead, we substituted her experience working with families through the auspices of her church ministry.

Ms. Tracey read Ingolsby, Smith and Miller's, *Exploring Family Theories* and selections from Nancy Boyd Franklin's *Black Families in Therapy*. Ms. Tracey wrote reviews of the chapters in the former text and discussed the information in the latter text with me, applying the material to her experience working with families. Ms. Tracey's ability to apply the theoretical information she was studying was impressive. Her work indicated her ability to understand families in all their diverse methods of coping and not coping, with tragedies and everyday insults of living; to apply the information she was learning

with insight, but also with nuance. What was most impressive is what underlies these actions – a remarkable compassion. This was most in evidence when discussing the vagaries of women in domestic abuse situations. Never did Ms. Tracey ever exhibit anything but compassion that extended to the entire family. Although Ms. Tracey held a philosophical and religious hope that families would be able to stay together, that never interfered with her understanding of the plight and inferiorization of women. It was an honor to observe the concordance of both those, often conflicting views.

Unfortunately, I write this evaluation posthumously. While Ms. Tracey passed away before providing a reflection of her own learning in this study, my experience in participating in her church's memorial service gave me a new understanding of her deep knowledge and healthful work with families in ways that I doubt Ms. Tracey even could have articulated. Certainly over the years we worked together, I had only a glimpse of her understanding, work and ability to help and heal families. It was only at the memorial service that I learned of the depth of her knowledge and employment of that understanding. Tributes to Ms. Tracey's work and biographic eulogies demonstrated her unique work with families

that extended from her own to those in her community. She worked tirelessly and well: on call at any time a family was in need; individualizing solutions for families in her community – from programs for children to retreat educational trips for women, all the while fulfilling her own family's needs with grace and authority.

It sometimes happens in this college that our adult students' knowledge surpasses our expectations. The memorial service reflected the depth and breadth of Ms. Tracey's understanding of families, family dynamics and multiple, flexible interventions for families in need. These qualities had been exhibited in her work, but not the profundity of her knowledge. Her practicum with families began long before this study, and the level of theory we were engaging could likely not capture the fullness of her understanding. As also sometimes happens at Empire State College, the student teaches the mentor. I left her memorial wondering how I could better have met her extraordinary prowess in working with families at this level of education.

Catherine Tracey was one of the most thoughtful and caring individuals, and too humble to shout her capacities. She will be deeply missed, but also earned more than the necessary 4 credits for her work with families.

Found Things

What follows is a section of a report, “The Mentor Role at Empire State College,” written in 1994. Jane Altes, vice president for academic affairs, and mentors Reed Coughlan, Judy Gerardi and Lois Muzio served as the Mentor Role Committee and produced this document. Its purpose was to help the college think about the history of mentoring, different aspects of mentoring work, measurement of workload and options for change. Included here is the section of the document titled, “The Mentor Role.”

The Mentor Role

What the Mentor Role is not:

Despite common titles and salary scales, Empire State College mentors have performed functions vastly different from those of faculty in other parts of SUNY. These differences are observable in respect to the use of time, the range of responsibilities and the nature of student/faculty relationships. Beyond teaching, scholarship, governance and contribution to the community, mentors have, a variety of other roles and responsibilities (as, for example, unit coordinators and faculty chairs). Mentors are more responsible than their SUNY colleagues for advising, counseling, providing information to students and managing their own workloads. Unlike other SUNY faculty, mentors’ responsibilities do not begin and end with the enrollment cycle. Mentors’ advisement and time commitment to students begin prior to enrollment and continue afterwards. They are more responsible than their counterparts for representing the college to prospective students and the larger community. They evaluate learning that has occurred outside their classrooms. They also locate, hire and train tutors and evaluators in addition to selecting learning materials for a broad range of topics. Mentors make decisions

and take actions that in a typical college would fall within the domains of curriculum committees, personnel departments, admissions and registrar’s offices, printing services, audiovisual services, social services, search committees, program planning committees and the secretarial staff. The Empire State College mentor role differs from that of a typical university faculty member.

What the Mentor Role is:

Thus mentors differ from other faculty in terms of their functions in education. Further, a number of role characteristics distinguish the mentor from other teaching faculty. The one-to-one student/mentor model, for example, was central to Empire State College’s educational philosophy and practice. As in all growing systems, this role has been adapted to various demands through the process of specialization. Role variability in response to students’ needs, environmental constraints and available resources has become an important characteristic of Empire State College’s programs. The following paragraphs attempt to define certain aspects underlying the particular practices associated with mentoring.

Mentors are:

1. Caring
Mentors become more familiar with their students than most classroom teachers. This leads to greater understanding of students’ individual characteristics and particular circumstances, especially when hardship is involved. It also leads to a greater tendency to devote time and energy in support of students’ educational efforts.
2. Representatives of the college
Mentors carry out information sessions within and outside the college on formal and informal occasions and are

seen by prospective students, enrolled students and the community as college representatives and contact persons.

3. Adaptive

All faculty may be known as mentors, but there is no single mentor role or job description. Among the academic and administrative factors contributing to the way mentors interpret their roles and fulfill their responsibilities are: the number of colleagues and the administrative support at the location, the type of educational materials and methods available, the disciplinary or interdisciplinary focus of students’ programs and/or studies, the number of students to be served, variation in student educational needs, and scholarly and personal attributes of the mentor.

For example, when student-to-student variations are great, as is the case in some centers and most units, mentors tend to become facilitators. They locate resources for many of their students while working with others on a one-to-one basis or in small groups. They teach a variety of topics within and often to the limits of their expertise. At any given time they may find themselves supervising studies in 15 or more discrete topics. Some mentoring methods such as study groups and residencies take advantage of similarities among students, areas of high demand, or the fact that a number of students are available at the same time and place to study the same topic. Ability to draw from a large population base permits the Center for Distance Learning mentors to serve large groups of students needing the same study simultaneously. Nevertheless, some mentors prefer to teach groups while others prefer one-to-one approaches. Variation in mentoring is one of the strengths of the college.

Conclusion:

While it is true that program innovation strengthens and stimulates the college and enhances our academic programs, we are reminded that mentoring is at the heart of the core values articulated by the college community.

4. Autonomous

With no more than information from the student and their own knowledge of the topic and of available resources, mentors guide students into content areas, sequences of study and learning methods. Similarly, the topics, content and credit values for learning contracts and study groups are determined by mentors. Tutors are recruited, engaged and evaluated by mentors acting as agents for their students and the college. Mentors decide how frequently to meet with students and how many students to meet at a time. Daily and weekly schedules and even the rate of enrollment and re-enrollment are within a mentor's control. Also within the mentor's control, and subject to other workload considerations, are the proportions of individual tutoring, group teaching, facilitation without teaching and evaluation of life-experience credit. The level of mentor autonomy when added to the range of responsibilities contributes to role proliferation.

5. Isolated

In a typical college, because the educator's teaching role is standardized by a predetermined curriculum designed to address groups of students with similar abilities and needs, that program development process is not included in the work assignment and the educator can work in relative isolation. In contrast, when the educational goal is to adapt materials, content and environments to student needs and the educator works on an ad hoc basis, the availability of a rich selection of reliable and good quality resources, and the ability to consult with knowledgeable and skillful

colleagues in and out of the college becomes crucial.

In spite of its obvious needs for connections, the mentor has tended to experience isolation. Other than the infrequent interactions available through the area of study groups and local faculty meetings, there are few opportunities for peer interaction and cooperation. Mentors seldom know what other mentors are doing; often they don't know that there are other

While it is true that program innovation strengthens and stimulates the college and enhances our academic programs, we are reminded that mentoring is at the heart of the core values articulated by the college community.

mentors with similar interests at all. Seldom do mentors work together on educational projects. And, in addition to geographic dispersion, the number of hours needed to maintain expected student loads contributes to a mentor's academic and functional isolation.

The impact of isolation on evolving mentor roles can be seen in the efforts of some mentors to expand their knowledge bases to offer a broader range of studies to their students. For other mentors, it has underpinned efforts to specialize thereby gaining greater control over the range of possibilities in their workloads. Small groups of mentors working together to offer students a greater variety of study topics could reduce the tension caused by conflicting needs of

mentors and students. Possibilities for interdisciplinary work by both students and mentors would also be enhanced. Certainly, potential for interdisciplinary education and scholarship is another strength of the college.

Conclusion:

Obviously efforts to reduce mentor isolation are already being made. They include the combined area of study meeting, VAX communications, Cultural Diversity and Women's Studies Residencies, and the Mentoring Institute. But the importance of material and temporal support for more frequent contacts among mentors within the daily work schedule needs to be underscored.

6. Specialized and generalized

Originally, the mentor role was designed to be that of a generalist in respect to educational content and process – one which would guide a variety of students studying a variety of topics.

While the generalist seems to have been most effective in dealing with the diversity of the adult population encountered in units and centers, there has been a generally accepted trend toward specialization in some parts of the college. Certainly, there is a need to offer specialized studies and there are faculty who have become more specialized in certain mentoring activities. Yet from the perspective of students the generalist mentor tends to have a unifying effect on their educational experiences. Empire State College faculty are responsible for both teaching and advisement. When the teaching component of mentoring is accepted by a mentor and the advisement component is rejected or disregarded, other mentors are affected, and the student is not well served.

Any mentor whose commitment is confined to the teaching function distorts Empire State College's educational enterprise. Such mentors are not "student centered" and, as a result, create work problems for their generalist colleagues.

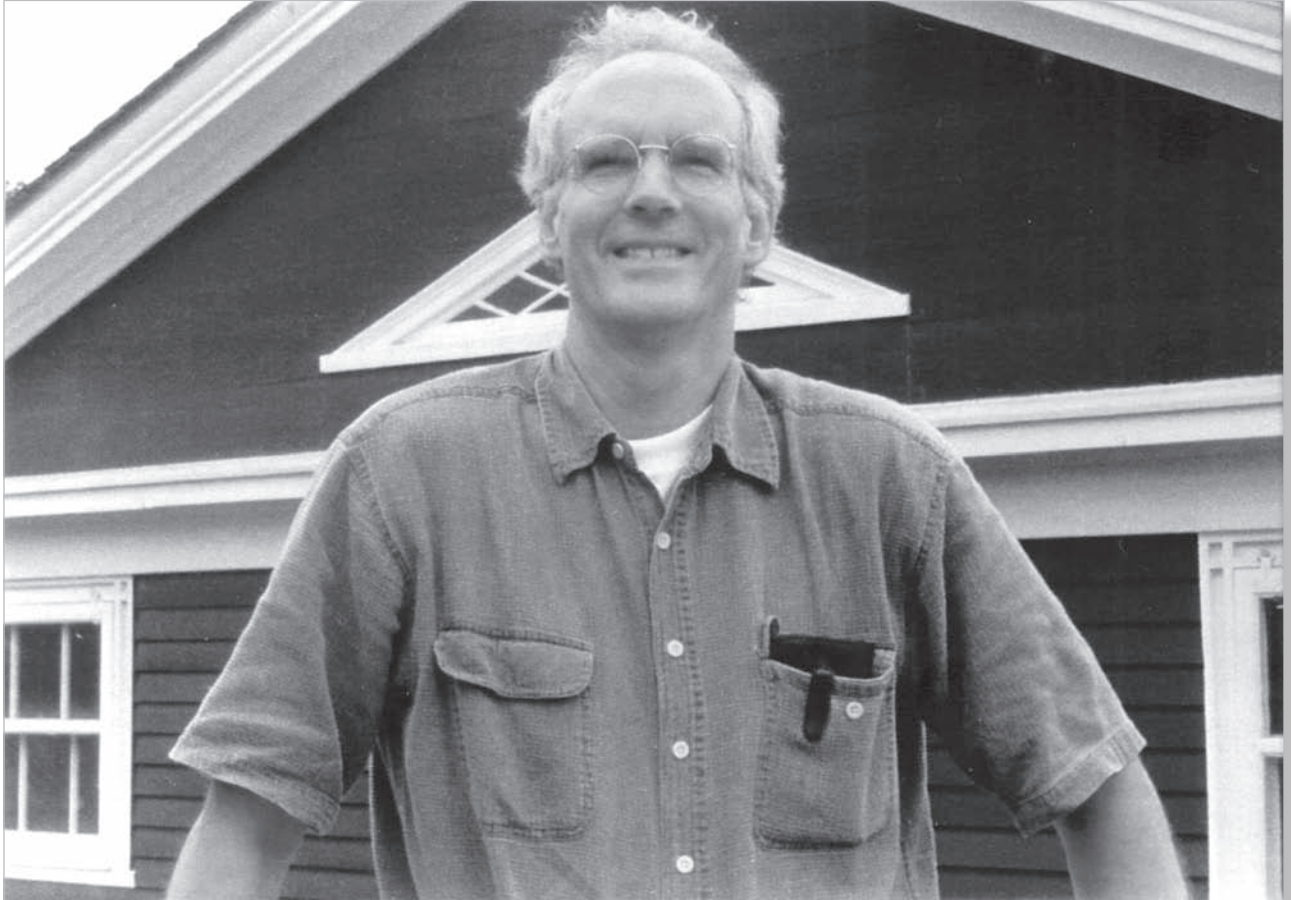
Conclusion:

While role specialization may vary between programs of the college (e.g., a center mentor may tutor more than a unit mentor), and while subject specialization may be more natural in the graduate program than in undergraduate instruction, substantial variations between mentors within the same or similar programs may breed resentment and may contribute to the perception of workload inequity.

“Such criticism [by the Carnegie Commission] leads many people to ask whether it is possible to conceive of a different style of learning. The same people, paradoxically, when pressed to specify how they acquired what they know and value, will readily admit that they learned it more often outside than inside school. Their knowledge of facts, their understanding of life and work came to them from friendship or love, while viewing TV, or while reading, from examples of peers or the challenge of a street encounter. Or they may have learned what they know through the apprenticeship ritual for admission to a street gang or the initiation to a hospital, newspaper city room, plumber’s shop, or insurance office. The alternative to dependence on schools is not the use of public resources for some new device which ‘makes’ people learn; rather it is the creation of a new style of educational relationship between man [sic] and the environment. To foster this style, attitudes toward growing up, the tools available for learning, and the quality and structure of daily life will have to change concurrently.”

Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society*. New York: Harper and Row, 1970 (103-4)

In Memoriam Bob MacCameron



Bob MacCameron

It was my very great pleasure to work closely with Bob MacCameron for 15 years. I don't have vivid memories of meeting him for the first time, though I do remember noting, early on, that he was very tall! Rather, after I became associate dean at Empire State College in Buffalo, it was as if his calm, quiet presence simply emerged as I became more and more aware of his consistent professionalism, his deep commitment to the mission of the college, his skill as a mentor to our students and his unwavering reasonableness. And somewhere in that period I learned that his devotion to a liberal political perspective was probably as fervent as my own. And so we became

friends as well as colleagues, and that friendship has meant the world to me.

Shortly after his decision, last spring, to forego any further heroic treatment in his long battle with cancer, Bob phoned me and said that he'd like to ask a favor. With characteristic diffidence, he quickly added, "You can say no, of course." I laughed and said, "Bob, what kind of favor am I likely to refuse under these circumstances!" His "favor" was that I would speak at this event, whenever it was to happen. But, he said, "I don't want you to talk about me: I want you to talk about Empire State College and how much it has meant to us." With

apologies to Bob, I cannot talk about the college without talking about his role at the Niagara Frontier Center.

A quick bit of biography: after his graduation from Colgate, Bob worked briefly as a reporter, and then had two years in the Peace Corps before going to the University at Buffalo to earn a Ph.D. in history. Upon graduation, he was awarded a one-year Lilly Endowment post-doctoral teaching fellowship at Empire State College. (Other Lilly fellows that year included Chris Rounds and Marilyn Gwaltney.) His Lilly fellowship a great success, he joined the faculty in 1977 and remained until his

retirement in 2000. Empire State College, thus, was where Bob spent most of his career, and it was an institution marvelously suited for him, and he for it.

For those unfamiliar with us, ours is an institution devoted to adult learners, most of them degree completers whose earlier attempts to earn bachelor's degrees were postponed for various reasons such as lack of appropriate commitment the first time around, or the pressures of jobs or family or community. Our students, therefore, range from self-directed highly motivated independent learners – folks who are, to be honest, very easy to teach – to extremely insecure adults whose earlier educational experiences might have been fairly unpleasant and whose trepidation upon re-entry is palpable. Most of our work with these students is done through guided independent study rather than in a classroom setting, allowing maximum flexibility in scheduling and access for busy adults.

All this suited Bob perfectly. First, the egalitarian goal of the college was exactly right for him. Second, the wonderful range of students delighted him: he was an inspirational mentor and teacher for the highly motivated and he was incredibly patient and deeply interested in facilitating learning for students who found academia vastly more difficult. And the one-on-one nature of our work suited his preference for focused conversation over a lecture model. I considered him a consummate mentor – students at all skill levels were delighted to work with him. Those who came to him with deep interest in history were inspired by his scholarship, and those who came dreading the experience were uniformly converted. They did not, perhaps, become historians, but I fully believe that all of them discovered a way of learning about history that awakened interests that surprised them. I remember eavesdropping outside his office on one occasion when he was meeting with a struggling student. That conversation should have been in a textbook on mentoring! First Bob praised the strengths of a paper the student had submitted, and then he carefully pointed out where improvement was needed and revision was required. The student said, at one point, “Then I’m through, huh?”

and Bob very kindly responded, “No, you’ll need to re-do this paper. Here’s what you need to pay attention to.” And he proceeded to enumerate carefully the changes that would be required. It was all so clear, so nonpersonal, so matter of fact in the assumption that the student was well equipped to make the required changes.

In addition to his role as a teacher and mentor, Bob was devoted to his own life as a scholar, and that devotion led him, early in his career, to an amazing decision. He chose to relinquish his full-time position, which carried with it all of the perks of an academic career – the promise of sabbatical leaves, the prestige of the professoriate, the security of tenure – and opted instead to work part time. He made this decision because he felt that he could not devote appropriate attention to the demands of his student load and also sustain a life of scholarship. Many times over the years we tried to change his mind, but he remained very firm in what would have been, for most people, a risky decision. His meticulous scholarship produced a book, *Bananas, Labor and Politics in Honduras*, as well as chapters in three books devoted to environmental history. There were also a number of articles and reviews as well, and conference presentations. He was deeply proud of the Aldo Leopold Award from the American Society for Environmental History (1994) and most fittingly, he was given the Empire State College Award for Excellence in Scholarship in 1984.

In 2000, Bob decided to retire. It was somewhat earlier than he’d planned – and, again, I argued vigorously against it, knowing how much the Niagara Frontier Center would miss him, and, selfishly, knowing how much I would miss him. Given his unremitting attention to “what’s best for our students,” though, Bob feared that his health issues might unexpectedly escalate and interfere with his students’ progress. He had a horror of leaving chaos or confusion, and preferred, instead, to leave nothing undone, no student in limbo. We asked him to speak at our graduation that year, and he gratefully accepted. His speech focused, characteristically, on his students. He named many of them, acknowledging in each case what he’d learned from them. It was a wonderful speech!

Fortunately for me, Bob’s retirement didn’t end our friendship. In the last few months, particularly, we enjoyed our usual spirited conversations, talks that felt entirely “normal,” not altered by his sickness. We’d range among family news – keeping up with each others’ spouses, siblings and children, and keeping up with our Empire State College family as well. We chatted about whatever we were reading, but mostly we ranted about politics. At one point early in the summer, when our president had said or done something that struck Bob as particularly egregious, he said to me, “You know I’m too angry to die!” I replied, “Bob, you know how much I love you: if you think that re-electing George Bush would keep you alive in order to be angry, I’d consider voting for Bush.” Bob did a quick double take, and then he laughed and said, “Oh no you wouldn’t!” As many of you probably know, Bob obtained an absentee ballot as soon as the law allowed, convinced that he wouldn’t be alive on election day. Then, honorable man that he was, he phoned the Board of Elections to make sure his vote wouldn’t be considered fraudulent if, indeed, his death preceded November 2. Who else would have bothered to ask!

I’m sure that I had the same conversation with him that many others shared: his semi-apologetic demeanor when his health unexpectedly improved through the spring, summer and fall, his embarrassment that he’d been “kicked out” of hospice care after essentially promising lots of people that he’d die soon. But there he was, still alive!! I told him – and I’m sure that you did, too – that his guilt would simply have to be worked out in some other way, because I refused to feel even slight regret that he remained alive. Once, he talked hesitantly about his sense that he’d improved, perhaps, because he was so incredibly buoyed by the love and support he’d received from his friends and family. When I agreed with him, noting that links between emotional well being and healing are well established, he laughed and said, “Well, you know I have only one deep abiding religious belief – that the Red Sox are truly cursed!” (Many of us were thrilled that Bob lived to see the outcome of the Series; while the Sox victory may have challenged that one abiding religious tenet,

it also brought him enormous joy, long overdue satisfaction.)

Indeed, the last months of his life were a blessing. Things remained so nearly the same between us that I'd forget, in the heat of our rants, that he was in such a threatened place. Only in the car, driving back to Buffalo, would it hit me hugely that any of these visits could be our last.

Our last came the Friday before his death on February 24. Mark Goldman (formerly an Empire State College mentor) and I visited with him together and again that conversation was vintage Bob – we talked about Horace Seymour, about Grace Kelly and Prince Rainier, about unrest at UB during the '70s, and, just a little tiny bit, we talked about him and about his wife, Phyllis (who he met, by the way, when she was also on the Empire State College faculty). I told him how grateful were all of his college friends for the presence of Phyllis in his life – of how remarkable she'd been through this long ordeal and how much richer was his life because of her. He responded, "Nobody's more grateful than I am!" Just before we left, he said, "I'm ready for this to be over." But he said it without the slightest trace of self-pity or whining.

**Anne R. Bertholf, Former Dean,
Niagara Frontier Center**

Bob Mac

Others here today have spoken eloquently of Bob's compassion, integrity and scholarship. And he was all of that. But he was more. By sharp contrast with his dignity, I'll remember his sly sense of humor. And his laugh. It sounded like that of a mischievous child. And it made me laugh in response.

I remember a time when Bob and I were driving back to Buffalo from Albany on the thruway with our former colleague Jack Burke and former dean Peter Ristuben. I should probably say first that Peter was shorter than I am and that Jack is taller – but not, of course, as tall as Bob.

Something we saw along the way moved me to make – as I had been doing for a while by then – some stupid joke about Bob's being as tall as a tree. And, as he would

often do when I did that, he responded by reciting the lyrics of a truly nasty song titled "Short People." Bob, Jack and I continued to make cracks at each other's expense for some time and ended up laughing.

Since Peter was with us – he was driving, in fact, and trying hard to get into the spirit of things – we managed to control ourselves for quite a while. But then we passed the exit for Shortsville. And we lost it. While Peter wondered aloud what was going on, we laughed and laughed for many miles in that uncontrollable way of 10- or 12-year-olds.

I haven't laughed that way since.

I miss Bob.

**Keith Elkins, Long-time Mentor,
Niagara Frontier Center**

Bob MacCameron

I met Bob on my first day at Empire State College ... early September, 1977. Victor Montana, then associate dean at the Genesee Valley Center, had invited me up for an interview regarding a Lilly Foundation Fellowship. After meeting with Vic, he introduced me to Bob ... the only member of the Niagara Frontier Center faculty I was to meet that day. I was surprised to discover that Bob was a Latin American historian ... how many of us could a small college use, I wondered. I was later to discover that there were three of us in Buffalo!

Bob was my mentor. He was there to help my wife and me move into our first apartment in Buffalo, and he warned me that this was an office job ... at least eight hours a day, at least five days a week. He taught me about assessment meetings ... and introduced me to our assessment counselor, a Dr. Carol Twigg. And he taught me to run.

We ran two Skylon Marathons together.

Bob was also a family friend. Matt, who was two when first introduced, always referred to him as "Big Bob!" After that first year as a Lilly Foundation Fellow, the family and I moved to Bogota, Colombia, where I taught Latin American history to graduate students, and my wife Pat taught English

as a second language ... the beginning of a new career. Bob came to visit us for a week, and we got a glimpse of what it must have been like for him in the Peace Corps in Honduras. People laughed and pointed, and asked him about the weather up there. He took it all well, but after a day in local buses, he begged us to allow him to pay for taxis ... he was having flash-backs about old Bluebird school buses in Honduras.

We returned to Buffalo in 1979, when Carol Twigg moved on to Saratoga and I took on her assessment job. We had our stuff stored in her attic, and rented her apartment, so that part of the move was pretty straightforward. During the next three years I learned to count on Bob as the voice of reason and calm in an otherwise-slightly-demented environment. Bob, like me, tended to arrive early in the morning, and we were apt to huddle in my basement office to try to make sense of the world before things got weird for another day.

I left the Niagara Frontier Center in June of 1982. While Bob and I stayed in touch, it was much more sporadic than it had been. We saw each other at meetings, of course, and talked on the phone, but we also drifted apart. He and Phyllis joined us for lunch during a soccer tournament in Buffalo a couple of years ago, and it was briefly like old times, except that this wonderful woman had come to share Bob's life. Anne Bertholf, a good friend to both of us, kept each abreast of changes in the other's life. And it was Anne who told me about Bob's cancer and kept me informed as hopes rose and fell. Bob and I talked for the last time during the summer before he died. He wanted to be brought up to date on the family, and was especially attentive to the life of his old 'roomie' from Bogota, Matthew. That was Bob, always concerned about others, and reluctant to share his own burdens.

**Chris Rounds, Mentor,
Central New York Center**

(Words from Anne Bertholf and Keith Elkins are taken from remarks offered at a memorial service for Bob MacCameron that was held on June 11, 2005 in Clarence, New York.)

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Send submissions to Alan Mandell (Empire State College, 325 Hudson Street, New York, NY 10013-1005). It is most convenient if your submissions are sent via e-mail or on disk. We very much look forward to your contributions. The next issue of *All About Mentoring* will be published in late spring 2006. Please send your contributions to Alan Mandell by April 1, 2006.

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