



FOCUS

ON TEACHING AND LEARNING
COMMITTEE FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AND LEARNING



Volume 2 Issue 4

Changes in Mathematics Courses Scheduled for Mott - Winter 2008

CPSC recently approved several important changes in mathematics course offerings which will go into effect for Winter Semester 2008. Many of these changes are minor and reflect changes in the course numbering system so it will better reflect appropriate sequencing of objectives and skills for the courses.

A new course that has been added is MATH 145, Pre-Calculus, which is a course that has been requested by many students and other higher education institutions. A pilot offering of this course will be available in the Fall 2007 listings. MATH 105, Applications-based Mathematics, has been moved from being offered as a Seminar to being an actual class. This class carries a MAC designation and has been requested by many Mott areas as an option for the math course for students in Programs with an applied nature.

A change which has been made to support Mott's ability to have students' courses articulate to four-year institutions is the change of Calculus IV (5 credits) to two courses - MATH 270 Linear Algebra (3 credits) and MATH 280 Differential Equations (4 credits).

The current class MATH 101, Beginning Algebra (5 credits) has been modified and will become MATH 110, Beginning Algebra (4 credits) and will be offered for Winter 2008. Advisors, counselors and students should make sure to note that the new course will carry a prerequisite of successful completion of MATH 021 with an S, or placement into MATH 110 by the MCC placement exam. Several discussion groups met in April to discuss how this change will affect students completing degrees in their areas, and additional discussions about the impact of this change are planned throughout this academic year.

Any group interested in hearing more about these changes should contact the Division of Science and Math.

Johanna Brown - Dean of Science and Math Division

Note: See Course Equivalency Chart pg. 6

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FOCUS Publication Members

As subcommittee members, we would like you to know that we value your input. **If you have an article or some information that you would like to share, you may forward it to any of these members for publication in the FOCUS.**

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Special Points of Interest:

Interest:

MCC Nursing Program Celebrates 50 Years!

A Christian Fundamentalist in a Reader Response Class: Merging Transactions and Convictions

By Greg Shafer

What is needed in reading instruction is a vision of power of print to change lives. When the instruction provides students with opportunities to become active participants in the process, to question and critique, readers become empowered (40). ---Multiple Voices, Multiple Texts

There is something very democratic and creative about reader response criticism. With its invitation to create a text from the heritage and values of every reader—and with its belief in the artistic ability of those readers to construct a poem as one would a musical performance—language users are liberated to become artists of a unique literary experience. In the reader response classroom there are no monolithic readings and no authorities to whom students must subordinate themselves. When Rosenblatt discussed it as a dynamic performance, as an “event in time” (12), she was addressing the New Critics and their notion that reading was bound by a text and that the goal of the reader was to unearth or discover a meaning that was already embedded in the reading. The process was objective and governed by a desire to reduce errors and presuppositions that had nothing to do with correct interpretations. For Rosenblatt, who was responding to I.A. Richards and his close look at readings in *Objective Criticism*, reading was about a transaction, so that a text becomes a poem when it was imbued with life by the experiences and values of the reader. In discussing this democratic transition—from New Criticism to Reader Response—Bressler suggests that “what differentiates Rosenblatt’s and all reader response approaches from other critical approaches is their diverting the emphasis away from the text as the sole determiner of meaning to the significance of the reader as an essential participant in the reading process and in the creation of meaning. Such a shift,” adds Bressler, “negates the formalists’ assumption that the text is autonomous” (49). Indeed, in moving from New Criticism to Reader Response, students progress from passive to active reading, from discovering a text to creating one.

But what happens when the spirit and empowerment of a reader response approach seems to be truncated or undermined by deeply entrenched beliefs—beliefs

that seem to negate other aspects of the student’s persona? Last year, I grappled with questions of how to assist a student who seemed to be divorced from the dynamic reading experience that yields both personal and critical responses to a text. In Danielle, a warm and amiable student in two of my composition classes, I found a writer who seemed unable to tap into the mosaic of ideas that constitute an empowered transaction with a text because of her religious heritage. Whether the discussion revolved around a woman’s place in the home or the policy toward gay and lesbian marriage, Danielle appeared to rely on the perspective of her religious teachings and the Bible specifically in all of her opinions. In doing so, she seemed to me to be limiting her ability to interact more broadly with various texts in class. Her conservative religious background allowed for little personal interpretation, in effect commandeering the reading process and removing Danielle from the experience. How, I wondered, do I acknowledge a person’s right to her religion while encouraging her to consider other perspectives towards her reading and writing as well?

Literature as Exploration

Such questions are addressed in *Literature as Exploration*, where Rosenblatt suggest that it is the duty of the instructor to help students transcend the stock responses that emanate from their past and become more independent, more liberated readers. “In the molding of any specific literary experience, what the student brings to literature is as important as the literary text itself,” (82) writes Rosenblatt. However, she continues, it is imperative that the instructor “create a setting that makes it possible for the student to have a spontaneous response to literature. . . . Once the student has responded freely, a process of growth can be initiated” (108). Of course, a truly

free response is impossible if the student is forever stymied by rigid verities that have been part of what Freire would call a banking system of learning. In the Reader Response class, students do not deny their past—whether it is religious or political—but are also not limited by caveats from that past. Reading, then, must be a dynamic moment in time, not a mechanical recollection of embedded, monolithic truths. Reading must be fluid and new with each transaction.

In short, Rosenblatt suggests that a reader response approach requires an interpretation that is not appropriated by dictums from authority figures, who hover invisibly over the readers’ heads and remind them of lessons from their past. This part of the readers’ experience and culture, while often an element of the transaction, must never become despotic, must never usurp the reader’s ability to appreciate the many aspects of a poem and to read it in a new and dynamic way. “In addition to preventing an understanding of what is read,” Rosenblatt continues, “rigid attitudes may seriously impair the reader’s judgment even of what he has understood” (101). Later she adds that readers must take their “old sense of things” and reinterpret them in “the light of this new literary experience, in the light of new ways of thinking and feeling offered by the work of art” (107).

Thus, it was my goal to assist Danielle in both honoring her religious background and contemplating alternative readings that she might evoke as she read and interacted with language—alternative readings that reflected other aspects of her value system besides religion. In expanding her vision of the texts she read, I felt that I was nurturing the kind of reading that Rosenblatt describes when she discusses the “reservoir of past life experiences” (*The Reader, the Text, the Poem* 90) that typifies every aesthetic reading. Could I help Danielle to pay “attention to all the kinds of responses involved,

sensuous and affective, as well as cognitive”? (*The Reader, the Text, the Poem* 88). Could I help her to consider readings that were not solely part of her obedience to a religious doctrine?

The Religious Influence

Having conversations with Danielle was always intriguing for what it revealed about her religious convictions and the place they played in her life. “I checked with my minister and he pointed to these passages in the Bible,” she would often tell me as we discussed the aspects of gay marriage or the need for women to be submissive to their husbands. When pressed as to what she thought when pondering her research and the voices of many experts, Danielle was quick to return to the religious refuge of her congregation, often explaining, “it’s hard to understand if one is not a Christian. Was Danielle, I wondered, really engaging in the kind of literary activity that is part of a dynamic language class, the kind discussed by Vygotsky when he exulted the need for play, experimentation, introspection and the learning that they afford? In writing about Vygotsky, Yetta and Ken Goodman have suggested that playing and its risk-free elements are crucial to learning. They learn to understand the meanings of the world as they play with their representations of the world” (228).

Indeed, with reader response, as Vygotsky contends, students learn by applying personal values and reactions to a text. They “play” with the words; they weigh perspectives, and they contemplate the characters, themes, and style, juxtaposing other ideas with their own. But all of this is only possible if students are liberated to practice some reflective independence, if they are extricated from authority figures that impede their literary constructions.

(Continued on page 3)

Democracy in the Class

Such responses were quick to infuriate many of my students, who wondered why a participant in a college writing class was unable to transcend the monolithic caveats that seemed to flow quite freely from Danielle's reading. Of the many derisions she faced none was more damning than when an incredulous student asked if she knew that she lived in a nation that separated church and state and that college scholarship demanded more than what was said by her minister on Sunday. "Maybe it's time to think for yourself," he said with a derisive smile. Such responses generated a class discussion on the notion of discourse communities and Frank Smith's reminder that we all learn to read and write by identifying ourselves with a "club" or group of people who think and speak like us—people who accept us and celebrate our common beliefs. According to Smith, people "learn the language of the groups to which they belong (or expect to belong) and resist the language of the groups they reject or from which they are rejected. They learn—as I have said in the previous essay—from the clubs to which they belong" (21).

As the class became more intolerant of Danielle's devotion to her convictions, I also reminded students that we all are part of a language tradition and that Danielle's approach is no different than others who might refer to the Founding Fathers, Marx, or Martin Luther King as a paradigm for reading and universal truths. Indeed, the very fact that so many referred to our founding fathers might suggest that we have elevated these very fallible men—men who held slaves and denied women the right to vote—to the position of secular gods.

Facilitating Empowered Learning

While this helped to quell much of the acrimony, my concern centered on not only about Danielle's comfort in the class but her ability to be active in her own learning. At the core of the reader re-

sponse philosophy, it seems to me, is the idea that reading and writing are constructive processes, involving a person in a social context. Key to the democratic paradigm is participation and the idea that students use reading and writing to assume participatory roles in their lives—to feel empowered through genuine expression in a social context. Of course, students become less participatory when they are controlled by a text rather than use it as a way to create a literary event.

Ira Shor writes of this in his book *Empowering Education* when he argues that participation and problem posing are imperative if students are to feel empowered and make substantive changes in their lives—if they are to construct and develop rather than listen and obey. "To make problem-posing work, the teacher needs to listen carefully to students to draw out the themes and words from which critical curricula are built. Students participation provides the raw material for the inquiry" (54).

Inherent in Shor's quotation is the suggestion that reading is always ideological and that ideas can only be appropriated from the reader in a context where those ideas are perceived in a monolithic or "objective" fashion. In his book *Power and Criticism*, Cleo Cherryholmes discusses the importance of reader engagement in the act of reading, suggesting that the only way to exclude a person from a reading is to treat a text as "univocal" or delivering a single meaning. For Cherryholmes, it is essential that readers be emancipated to imbue the text with their personal verities, removing the authority of the text in the process. "Teaching can assist students in questioning textbooks and themselves. Links to larger social settings and experiences can be pointed out. Of course, such teaching subverts the textbook," he posits (64). My goal was to help Danielle to engage in a truly transactional literary experience, to interrogate calcified "truths" so that her reading was organic, dynamic, and not stultified by a textual despotism. In short, I wanted her to be a full partner in the transaction that makes language an artistic endeavor.

Key to achieving progress with any student in this situation is first to earn her trust. Early in the semester, Danielle asked me if I liked her and if she would be treated fairly in the class. This gave me the opportunity to discuss my respect for her and my sincere desire to make her a better writer. In gaining her trust I assured her that I wanted her to be successful and that writing for my class—and becoming a writer that appealed to a secular audience—would only help her in both her religious and professional life.

Suggestions and Approaches

So how does one proceed? In teaching Danielle, whom I might add was a very bright and congenial student, I was reminded of historian Howard Zinn's definition of what it means to be an artist. Emboldened by the war in Iraq and the trepidation that many felt to make their voices of dissent heard, Zinn declares that true artists are those who are "transcendent" and progressive in their willingness to go beyond the obvious and challenge entrenched orthodoxies. "So the word transcendent comes to mind when I think of the role of the artist in dealing with the issues of the day," writes Zinn.

Central to Zinn's declaration is the notion of thinking beyond the obvious, beyond what is presented to us as truth. In dealing with Danielle, I wanted to facilitate this kind of reflective transcendence, whether or not it meant changing her ideas about her church. Such an approach, I believe, is important for any student who ardently supports a position. Traditions—whether they emanate from a religious or cultural foundation—must always be respected, but they must also be able to stand the test of inquiring students.

Assuming the Role of Teacher

In working with Danielle, I wanted a more engaged, more liberated approach, so I reminded her and her classmates that they are all teachers when they do research. Part of a writer's job is to explain his/her

scholarship and make a case for that position. Thus, instead of challenging Danielle's constant references to the Bible, I invited her to tell the class what she believed and to persuade us by scrutinizing the nuances of her creed. This meant that essays had to be rigorously supported with the same kind of research that other students used and required that she transcend the platitudes she often used in class discussions. Her sources, when she used interviews from her church members or minister, had to fit the profile of an expert, and her notions of scholarship were scrutinized in student forums. In short, Danielle would become a more active, reader response student by celebrating and interrogating the essence of her conservative ideals and plumbing their essence for the class and herself. No longer was it enough to tell us what her minister thought. Now, she had to emerge from the shadows that Rosenblatt discussed and have the spotlight on her transaction with the various texts she encountered. "As we survey the field of literary theory, then," writes Rosenblatt, "the reader is often mentioned but is not given the center of the stage" (4). Clearly, no matter their convictions, it is imperative that we invite all students to allow the "spotlight" (Rosenblatt 4) to shine on them.

In doing a research paper, Danielle chose to write a provocative essay on the institution of marriage and the role of women in this time-honored institution. She discussed the traditional values promulgated by early media and the prevalence of women like June Cleaver in the homes of Americans in the years after the war.

What is interesting about Danielle's experience in writing this paper—and the collision of her religious beliefs with the demands of the academy—is how it compelled her to embrace the ideas of transcendence discussed by Zinn. And so, through several rough drafts and conferences, her paper evolved from a simple polemic on her religious defense of women as subordinate to an essay that blended the voices of several different people and arguments—including her own.

(Continued from page 3)

In writing this, she seemed to discover her place in a reader response activity by expanding her language transaction beyond the religious—by dipping into the reservoir of experiences that Rosenblatt finds so important to Reader Response activities. At the same time, I, as a teacher, respected her discourse community as equal to any I would teach during the semester. Indeed, in coming to galvanize Danielle's responses to language—and in respecting the community she represented—I learned as much about the social aspects of reader response as my students. Danielle was learning about herself by extending her transactions to other aspects of her life.

At first, in responding to scholarship that challenged her paradigm of truth, Danielle would dismiss literature that conflicted with her position, but eventually she was compelled to deal logically and thoughtfully with opposing viewpoints, constructing arguments that were removed from her minister and demanded her personal interpretation of the text. Gradually, she was scrutinizing her belief system and interpreting for herself and the class. While she was still an ardent member of a religious community, she was expanding this position as an individual.

Perhaps one of the most intriguing incidents occurred when she was questioned as to the misogyny that seems evident in her position and the clear patriarchy that radiated through the both religious and media depictions of family life. "God wants us to treat women as second class citizens?" asked one incredulous student. Another was equally as fervent, suggesting that "Maud" or "Roseanne," with their outspoken and more realistic portraits of marriage were what we should emulate from the television.

Being thrust into this kind of academic torrent required Danielle to begin to transcend her strict dependence on her minister and read these television programs as texts, texts that needed her scrutiny and response. Her final answer

to her critics was predicated on a well-supported reading of the literature that defended her beliefs in the stay-at-home mom. She was able to transact with the contentions of the secular world and make them part of her argument. In the end, Danielle never compromised or wandered too far from her religious moorings, but she did expand her world and incorporate sources from academic texts. At the same time, her need to play the role of instructor in a class-wide forum created a need for her to be engaged in the texts she read and assume an active role. She was, in short, a more reflective person within a conservative discourse community.

Interestingly, as Danielle became increasingly aware of her audience and the more secular community to whom she was writing, the students in class became more cognizant of Danielle's right to defend her religious beliefs and use varied sources to bolster arguments that many found anachronistic. Conservative publications and more mainstream texts were used to buttress positions that women belong in the home and that religious tradition still has a place in society. In short, Danielle had a right to her transaction with language as well.

In the end, Danielle convinced very few and journeyed only a small distance from her safe position as a person who seeks answers from the Bible and her religious authorities. Such an approach has the potential to stymie the kind of dynamic reading and scholarship that opens new vistas of knowledge. It can offer very little of the play that is celebrated by Vygotsky and precious little of the critical literacy extolled by Michael Apple. However, our goal in teaching students with zealous convictions is to invite them to probe those beliefs and to broaden their repository of knowledge in crafting a piece of college writing. We must always invite them to play but never suggest that their speech community is not valid.

As her teacher, I was happy to see Danielle acknowledge the importance of audience and the relevance of research beyond her

series of religious books and authorities. During my two semesters with her, I was able to get Danielle to appreciate the notion that her collection of religious truths are not monolithic for all and that her words and arguments must resonate with a diverse audience if she is to be a successful college writer. In facilitating a more reader response approach, I saw her question orthodoxies and articulate her personal interpretations for certain readings. As with any unique demographic that we encounter, Danielle's religious convictions presented me with a vexing dilemma as to how to respect her background while still cultivating the artist that is part of Zinn's transcendent theory.

We must create a context for discovery while venerating what students bring to class. Terry Dean best captures my experience when he argues "with increasing cultural diversity in classrooms, teachers need to structure learning experiences that both help students write their way into the university and help teachers learn their way into student cultures" (105).

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Celebrate! Celebrate!

Mott Community College and the Division of Health Sciences have two events to celebrate! We request your presence to make it perfect!

What are we celebrating?

- *Grand Opening of our newly renovated Health Sciences Laboratory. Tour Specialty Classrooms, Demonstration Laboratories, Simulations Labs, Group Study Rooms and Technology Lab. See state-of-the-art technology demonstrated by faculty and students.*
 - *Recognition of 50 years of quality Nursing Education at Mott*

When will this take place?

An Open House on Thursday, June 21, 2007, 3:30pm-6:30pm

Where will it be?

*Division of Health Sciences
Skills Laboratory Complex
Curtice-Mott Building
Second Floor; East Wing, CM2204
Mott Community College*

Our Celebration would not be complete without you so please add us to your calendar and plan to attend. We hope to see you June 21, 2007 between 3:30 and 6:30. No need to RSVP but if you have questions call 762-0317.

MATHEMATICS COURSES at MCC

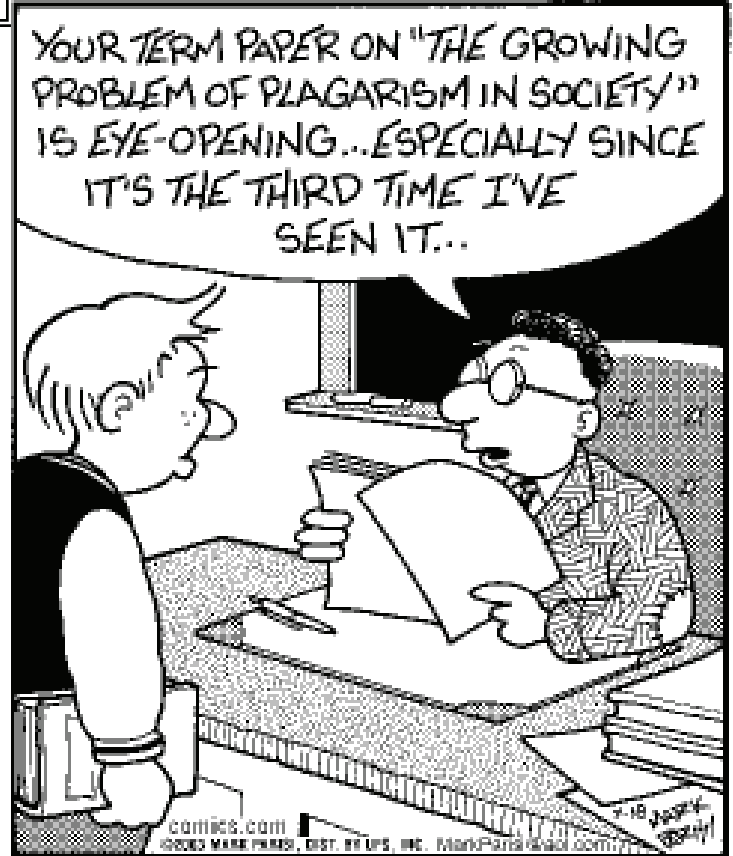
Old Course Number	New Course Number	CR/CT Hours	Course Name	Prerequisite
MATH-021 <i>(no change)</i>	MATH-021	5/5	Basic Mathematics	None
MATH-100 <i>(no change)</i>	MATH-100	4/4	Mathematics for Para-Professionals	'S' in Basic Math (MATH-021) or placement into Beginning Algebra (MATH-110) by the MCC placement exam
MATH-110 <i>(seminar changing to a new course)</i>	MATH-105	3/4	Applications-based Mathematics	'S' in Basic Math (MATH-021) or placement into Beginning Algebra (MATH-110) by the MCC placement exam
MATH-101	MATH-110	4/4	Beginning Algebra	'S' in Basic Math (MATH-021) or placement into Beginning Algebra (MATH-110) by the MCC placement exam
MATH-160	MATH-120	4/4	Intermediate Algebra	2.0 or higher in either Beginning Algebra (MATH-110); or placement into Intermediate Algebra (MATH-120) by the MCC placement exam
MATH-176	MATH-125	1/1	Introduction to Graphing Calculators	2.0 or higher in Intermediate Algebra (MATH-120); or placement into College Algebra (MATH-130) by the MCC placement exam
MATH-161	MATH-130	4/4	College Algebra	2.0 or higher in Intermediate Algebra (MATH-120); or placement into College Algebra (MATH-130) by the MCC placement exam
MATH-163	MATH-140	3/3	Trigonometry	2.0 or higher in Intermediate Algebra (MATH-120); or placement into College Algebra (MATH-130) by the MCC placement exam
<i>(new course)</i>	MATH-145	5/5	Pre-Calculus	3.0 or higher in Intermediate Algebra (MATH-120)
MATH-169	MATH-150	4/4	Probability & Statistics	2.0 or higher in College Algebra (MATH-130)
MATH-164	MATH-165	4/4	Applied Calculus	2.0 or higher in Intermediate Algebra (MATH-120)
MATH-167	MATH-170	5/5	Analytic Geometry & Calculus I	2.0 or higher in both College Algebra (MATH-130) & Trigonometry (MATH-140); or 2.0 or higher in Pre-calculus (MATH-145)
MATH-168	MATH-180	5/5	Analytic Geometry & Calculus II	2.0 or higher in Calculus I (MATH-170)
MATH-261	MATH-210	4/5	Mathematics for Elementary Teachers I	2.0 or higher in both Intermediate Algebra (MATH-120) & ENGL-101
MATH-263	MATH-220	4/5	Mathematics for Elementary Teachers II	2.0 or higher in Mathematics for Elementary Teachers I (MATH-210)
MATH-267	MATH-250	5/5	Multivariable Calculus	2.0 or higher in Calculus II (MATH-180)
MATH-278	MATH-270	3/3	Linear Algebra	2.0 or higher in Calculus II (MATH-180)
MATH-279	MATH-280	4/4	Differential Equations	2.0 or higher in Calculus II (MATH-180)

Have you ever posed a question, which applied to the whole world, and your students looked at you like you had spoken in a foreign language? If this has not happened to you, then try it and see what a starchy reaction you will receive. The following exercise has helped my students to develop a world's view about foreign affairs.

Once a week I have my students bring an article to class from the newspaper, which applies to some international affair—politics, education, health care, employment, etc. They must summarize the article and be prepared to present it to the class as a snapshot newsreel. When the presentation is over, the class is allowed to ask questions about the article. If the student cannot answer the question, I allow him/her to use the newspaper article to get the answer. Usually we get a wide range of articles—from “weapons of mass destruction”, “China the new automobile capitol of the world,” “Family reunions in Southern Sudan” to “Prince Williams dressed in a Nazi German Uniform” and “Ethiopia launches free Aids Drug Treatment.”

At the end of the semester I have the class write about the best learning experience for the semester. Invariably, they remark that the Global Minute has given them a broader view of the world, as well as a better understanding of how other cultures are so different from our American way of life.

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Education is the ability to listen to almost anything without losing your temper. ~ Robert Frost

Legal? Illegal? or Just Plain Stupid? Campus Copyright Law and Fair Use Issues

This year's CETL Winter Conference “**Legal? Illegal? or Just Plain Stupid? Campus Copyright Law and Fair Use Issues**” drew a full house as local colleges came together to hear Mr. Marc Lindsey share his wisdom on Copyright and Fair Use on campus. Mr. Lindsey came to the CETL Conference from Washington State University, where he is a professor of Business Law, author, and the university's copyright specialist.

His morning presentation not only covered copyright law but when and how copyrighted material can be used in college lec-

ture material and the steps you need to take to assure that as an instructor you are in compliance with “Fair Use Doctrine” and not participating in illegal copyright infringement. He gave us a litmus test that we could perform to help determine if what we were using was in the realm of “Fair Use” or “Copyright Infringement”. The one thing that I came away with from the morning session was if you are using others materials – get permission. This permission can come from the Copyright Clearance Center or the author of the material in question.

During the afternoon session, we broke

into groups to work on guidelines and develop policy ideas for the Academic Integrity committee on copyright and academic integrity. When The Academic Integrity committee reconvenes to continue this task, the information will be used to improve the way plagiarism is handled on campus and give guidance to faculty on “Fair Use” and “Copyright Infringement”.

This hot topic was CETL's most well-attended Winter Conference with over 100 participants from Kettering, Baker, U of M-Flint, and MCC.



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We're on the Web!

www.mcc.edu/cetl/focus

The Smart Choice!

The Mission Statement for The Foundation for Mott Community College

The major purpose of the Foundation is to acquire and distribute resources to students, faculty, staff, and the educational, literary, multicultural, and other activities of MCC, which build worth and advance excellence by adding value to individuals and richness to the community.

C A L L E N D A R

Mott Community College and The Foundation

2007 EVENTS

Heritage Society

June 21, 2007 – TBA

Donor/Recipient Reception

11:30A Thurs., August 30 at the RTC

Foundation Garden Party

Thurs., Sept 6, 2007 – Time TBA
Ghassan & Manal Saab Residence

Annual MCC Lapeer Golf Outing

Fri., September 7, 2007 – Devil's Ridge

Motown, Mott & More

A lip sync review

Sunday, September 16, 2007 – TBA

Art Exhibit & Reception

featuring Artists Pauline Angle & Indy Bacon
October 2007 – TBA

Ballenger Lecture Series

featuring Morris Dees

7P Thurs., October 4, 2007 – MCC Recital Hall

Peace & Dignity Ceremony

10A Mon., October 8, 2007–Curtice Mott Building

Women In Education Fundraiser

featuring Christine Clifford, cancer survivor
October 11, 2007–details TBA

Dist Alumni Awards Ceremony

October 17, 2007 – Details TBA

Bruin Bear Reception

Fall 2007 – TBA

Inst Dev / Foundation for Mott Community College

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