



Upgrade your skills by attending these conferences!



Spring 2008

Reconnaissance of the Mott Library's Webpage

Today's mission is to determine what is contained in "Online Resources."

One of the tabs on the Mott Library website is "Online Resources". This is where students, faculty and staff will find a variety of databases that contain material from popular magazines, scholarly journals, newspapers and books.

All of these databases can be accessed from the Mott campus and from off-campus. When accessing the databases from off-campus, users will be prompted to enter the 14 digit number, above the barcode on the front of their Mott ID card.

Many of the database titles are self-explanatory: Criminal Justice Periodicals contains material from the criminal justice field, Michigan Newspapers provides users with articles from a number of Michigan newspapers and PsycArticles has over 100,000 full-text articles from publications of the American Psychological Association.

Other database titles are a bit ambiguous and users can click on the information "i" icon next to the database title and find out what is contained in CINAHL, OCLC FirstSearch or Thomson Gale PowerSearch.

Here is an overview of several databases found in "Online Resources":

MeL eBooks – This is a collection of 14, 900 full-text, digital books, containing a wide variety of subjects including American History, Anatomy, Math, Consumer Health, Zoology and Film.

OCLC FirstSearch – This collection of 27 databases provides coverage of the specific, ERIC, MEDLINE, WorldCatdissertations and the general, Wilson Select Plus, WorldCat and ArticleFirst.

Westlaw Campus – This service provides access to an enormous array of legal, business, and news information. Westlaw Campus has 2 sides: legal, containing analytical sources and reference sources, and news, containing media transcripts, trade journals, international sources and much more.

www.library.mcc.edu

Choose "Online Resources"

Note: Patrons off-campus will be prompted to enter the 14 digit number from the front of their Mott ID card.

WANTED: Faculty course reading lists

If you have a list of suggested or supplementary books for your class, send a copy to the Mott Library (Attention Mike Ugorowski) so we can attempt to have the listed materials available and be aware of changing topics.

FOCUS

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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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## Thoughts from a Stressless Recliner by Mara Jevera Fulmer

It's that time of year when I find myself, like many of my teaching colleagues, questioning what and why I'm doing this. Midterm grades have been turned in, major projects have been graded, and the results of more than nine weeks of work is beginning to become clear. And the view isn't all good.

It's not all bad, mind you. But I am one of those generally optimistic types who believe that there are some endearing qualities to just about every student who crosses the threshold of my classroom. It's just up to me, my overly optimistic beginning-of-the-semester-self says, to help the student reach their full potential. And yet...

There it is, the rubric-applied, aesthetically-judged, technically assessed results. In case you did not have prior knowledge, the field in which I teach is graphic design, a.k.a. visual communications, with more "specific" areas such as cross-cultural design, corporate identity and promotional design, publication design, and anything else that crosses my path. With more than 25 years in industry and 10 years as a fulltime educator, I feel fairly competent to assess the quality of the work turned in by students. My theoretical base grows from this practical experience through two graduate degrees that have added depth and breadth to the principles of communication design.

So my reaction to facing the reality of what had otherwise been a creeping feeling of doom, a dark cloud over my dying optimism, developed in several stages.

### Stage 1 – Classroom Observation and Gut Feelings

This is the stage where, as the semester progressed, you notice that there are the same students who always pay attention, always seem to get it or ask the "bright" questions, and always take notes! They are there for every class, or if they miss class or are going to be late, they apologize and make up what they missed by keeping in close contact with an equally ambitious classmate.

During this stage, you would also notice the strugglers. The ones for whom the concepts and technical issues seem a bit too complex, and grasping them takes more than a little practice. But they spend a lot of time practicing, will seek you or one of the more "expert" students for assistance, and will relentlessly and tirelessly keep at it until they achieve a very hard won "B" grade. If you could give an "A" for effort, you would. But the measures that are important to success in this course are also important to success in the industry. Effort must be balanced with the skill that is achieved.

And then there are either the "lazy talented" or the "overly entitled" students. Sometimes the same student might fall into both categories.

Sometimes the same student might fall into both categories. But more often, I'll see the student who believes his/her work is far better than it really is, aesthetically. And technically it is even more dismal.

As for the talented-but-lazy, this provokes a different kind of heartache. For here is a student who really could be a star – and while he or she probably already believes that to be the case – their work habits and technical skills are so dismal as to make it impossible to earn a passing or respectable grade. No amount of beauty or fantastic aesthetic can overcome the fact that they'll need the technical skills to implement their ideas in a manner consistent with industry standards. I'm not advocating they give up their creativity. Just the opposite. I'm urging this type of student to exercise some good work habits and just (please) pay attention!

So, in stage one, I begin to feel torn between that dark feeling of impending doom that my optimism for some talented students has been misplaced, excitement for those bright stars who have been working hard and "getting it", and an enduring hopefulness for the "strugglers" who have not given up despite their difficulties.

### Stage 2 – The Reality Check & Grading Major Projects

In stage 2, the hopefulness fades into dark chasms, with occasional bright shining moments of excitement as each "finished" project is reviewed in more detail for a final project grade. It is a challenge for the students to balance their aesthetic success with technical prowess, a balance that we've been trying to instill in our students from semester one, day one. While many have learned how to make something look reasonably good, their technical skills do not measure up to industry needs and the criteria for the course. Tutorials, demonstrations, lectures, and plenty of time to practice still have not added up to successful implementation. Detailed handouts, explanations, one-on-one assistance have only just begun to overcome the students' mental wall of confusion over the details for a highly complex project.

It's not that we intend for the project to be so complex. It is meant to address the application of a rather complex but important software program to the creation of a book chapter, that contained expected details for publication design. And it's not that this is the first project of the semester, either. The project occurs in stages, too, allowing for time to develop a plan that maps out how the various details of the design will be implemented. A chapter in a book... with folios, footers, headers, story, headline, caption, image. A project based on some real-world applications.

Continued on page 3.

But while the aesthetics of the finished projects turned in by the students often show much promise, the files that are also turned in (or not!) begin to reveal a much more varied level of attention to detail. And even then, it often looks like it was either thrown together at the last minute, or at best, a half-hearted effort to apply the principles and processes that are the given parameters for the assignment.

It is very hard not to feel offended by this lack of attention to the details. Yet I have to remind myself that it was not “about me,” that the students are not necessarily thinking “I’ll do this to piss her off.” No, in the end, while it is my responsibility to help them learn, it is a partnership. And my partner in the learning process has to be willing to take responsibility for pulling his or her own weight.

That includes taking notes, getting an early start, managing their time, looking things up, asking questions, and practice, practice, practice. For some, especially the “talented-but-lazy” and/or the “overly-entitled” in the class, this becomes a demonstration in exercising their free right to instant gratification... without good results.

That said, not everything that is turned in is bad. The strugglers shows signs of attention to detail with moderately successful results. I remain hopeful that these students would achieve even more if they continue their forthright efforts to learn. And the shining stars, the ones who remain highly focused, manage their time very well, take notes, ask questions, and even (G-d forbid) crack the book, succeed in addressing the majority of technical details while keeping a sharp eye on the aesthetic decisions they had committed to in their designs.

As I go through my grading on a long Sunday morning and afternoon inside my office in the empty art building, I keep my eye on the last project to grade, a design turned in by one of the more diligent students who always manages to “make it happen”... in a very good way.

### **Stage 3 – The One-on-One Heart-to-Heart**

It is a good thing that my class didn’t meet for another two days after the grading is completed, for it provided a little diffusion of my Sunday afternoon frustration. By the time class rolled around on Tuesday afternoon, I was feeling more optimistic and had even developed a plan to turn this experience into a learning moment, while making the best of the rest of the semester. I had resolved to meet with each student individually and discuss his progress. During our meeting, we talked about the details of the project, their planning, implementation, aesthetic design decisions, the stories themselves.

The project, after all, was called “Family Wisdom” and the stories it contained were meant to be pearls of wisdom from

their own family. Some of the stories were quite poignant, others irreverent. Some were frightening or sad, while still others were just plain hilarious. It was heartwarming when a student would take the project farther than just a superficial retelling or fictional family story, and turn it into an homage to their family history.

The meetings were frank, at least on my part. And I encouraged the students to ask questions or explain their own frustrations or concerns. The discussions seemed helpful and were accompanied by specific demonstrations of any problems and how they might be addressed. With the artwork laid out in front of us, and the file opened up on the large screen of my computer, we went through, step-by-step, the specific issues that needed to be addressed.

All-in-all, this stage of development was met with a renewed commitment by many students who had demonstrated some appreciation for the time spent going over the project’s grade and specific details.

### **Stage 4 – Hope Rebounds, There is still time!**

The meetings seemed to help us, both the student and me. For the struggler, it gave them another opportunity to get some face time with the instructor and clear up some confusion on their project’s implementation. For the bright shining stars, who often worked tirelessly, it provided the validation that their efforts were truly successful.

And for the talented-but-lazy, the meeting allowed for a very frank discussion about the power of impressions and learning partnerships.

It’s a two-way street, after all. And we – the teacher and the student – are both just human, and both capable of making mistakes in judgment. The student may be filled with youthful hubris and drawn to somewhat self-destructive behavior... The teacher shares guilt for quick judgment and self-centered misconceptions. In the end, a mutual clearing of the air occurs and both teacher and student finish the meeting with a mutual understanding about future expectations.

### **A New Challenge**

When I enter my classroom each day, as the semester comes to a close over the coming weeks, I train my thoughts on addressing the rewards of teaching, of enabling learning, and of motivating my students – and myself – and to keep focused on the challenges ahead. I see this as a design problem, one that involves issues of presentation, images, target audience, message, and an eventual best solution. Just like my students, I have a project to design, a project that makes it my charge to find new ways to unravel the mysteries of learning.

## Faculty Attend Strengths Quest Assessment Professional Development Workshop in February

Just before Spring Break, almost sixty faculty, administrators, and some staff members attended a professional development seminar based on a program called *Strengths Quest*. Dr. Idahlynn Karre let and assisted attendees in identifying personal strengths. Dr. Karre is an internationally known author and presenter who has retired after thirty-five years in teaching and administration and now devotes her time to writing on the topics of leadership and learning. Dr. Karre went on to explain how individuals could use those strengths in creating a positive learning environment.

Strengths psychology forms the basis for the assessment, which measures commonly found strengths. Attendees took the assessment before the workshop, and each had a print-out of results before attending. The workshop gave those who attended a brand-new lens to look at themselves, and from the conversations since the workshop, it would appear that many people learned something new. Many attendees reported experiencing the feelings that we want our students to have, self-discovery and acceptance.

The research behind the Strengths Quest assessment is based on an extensive survey conducted by the Gallup organization (the polling folks), which interviewed over 2,000,000 individuals from virtually every profession, career, and field of achievement. The findings demonstrated that top achievers understand their talents and strengths, and build their lives upon them. The Gallup organization found that the best in each

occupation spontaneously answered the same way in terms of strengths used in each role. While the survey located 426 strengths, only the thirty-four most common ones are included in the assessment.

Apparently, our strengths and talents are woven so tightly into the fabric of our lives that we, and others, often fail to discern them. A person may perceive their strengths as weaknesses because they have received criticism for displaying them. We often undermine our strengths because they come easily - we tend to value things that we have "earned." According to Dr. Karre, we should acquire skills based on our strengths if we want to strive towards success, but having strengths does not in itself produce excellence. Dr. Karre explained that we need to strategically acquire and develop strengths in unison. To this end, the workshop helped participants interpret their own assessments.

After this brief introduction, most participants seemed very interested in learning more. Those who attended seemed excited about this assessment, and many of the participants talked about the assessment's relevance to their work at the college. The Center for Teaching and Learning will work to offer further explorations of Strengths Quest in the coming months. In the meantime, those interested can visit [www.strengthsquest.com](http://www.strengthsquest.com), where they can explore a variety of materials related to using the assessment in their work and in their lives.

## Strengths Quest Reflection Exercise

### **I. Opportunities to Regularly Use Your Signature Themes in Your Career:**

Since the key to achieving to levels of excellence comes from maximizing our greatest talents, it is important that we have opportunities to use our Signature Themes within our careers.

- **Therefore, I want to regularly use the following themes in my career:**
- 

### **II. Opportunities to Do What You Do Best On a Regular Basis In Your Career.**

Doing what we do best brings a sense of fulfillment, joy and satisfaction. What we do best is a reflection of our greatest talents, and the knowledge and skills we add to build strengths.

- **Therefore, I want to do what I do best on a regular basis**

**by applying my greatest talents in the following types of activities:**

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### **III. Opportunities to Work in a Career that is Consistent with Your Values and Beliefs.**

When we work in roles and settings that are consistent with our most deeply held values and beliefs or provide opportunities to advance them, we are more motivated to succeed.

- **Therefore, I want my career or profession to be consistent with and a reflection of the following values and beliefs:**
-

**Thank you !**

The Committee for Excellence in Teaching and Learning would like to thank the following people and businesses for donating door prizes for the Winter Conference:

MCC Transitions School of Cosmetology

Applewood Café

Rib City Grill

Follet Bookstore

Hurley Health & Fitness Center

Mary Nicolai

Panera Bread

Fandagles

Vogt's Flowers

The following people who attended the Winter Conference were door prize winners:

Janet Westoff, Chris Bolla, Keith Frye, Celia Perez-Booth, Glen Harris, Michelle Robinson, Michael Ennis, Beth Peterson, Donna Tomchuck, Brian Harding, Joe King, and Jennifer Kroninger.

Those of us who completed the Strengthsquest Survey discovered new insights regarding how we might strengthen and use our natural strengths to achieve excellence. However, now what? The Center for Teaching and Learning will attempt to provide regular activities to help interested faculty and staff build on what we learned at the Winter Conference. In the meantime, you might want to consider the following reflective activity around using your strengths in your professions and in your personal lives.

**Student Response Systems at MCC**

Education Systems has recently invested in a rather interesting technology called student response systems (SRS) from Turning Technology. Many instructors at various institutions have found SRS effective in creating more interactive and engaging lessons and classroom activities.

These particular systems consist of a set of 64 clickers (called Response Cards) and one USB receiver. This receiver can be plugged in to any of the computers in our smart classrooms or labs. Each clicker has ten buttons and is about the size of a small cell phone.

There are many ways to integrate this product into our lessons, but it is being marketed as a survey response tool. Using a program called Turning Point (it works through PowerPoint, comes with the package, and can be installed on any computer) we are able to create surveys, polls, etc., that can help us gauge what our students know about a specific topic or reading. You ask the question and, using the clickers, students answer. You can even specifically assign clickers in order to review each student individually or they can be used anonymously.

The receiver tallies the responses and you can instantly view the results on the screen. The program lets you open and close the poll, see how many people have responded, choose from several different view options, etc.

MCC now has two of these systems and both should be ready for use starting in the Fall semester and can be requested much like how we currently request AV equipment. Those teachers interested in learning more about SRS or how to use it should contact Randy Schapel in Educational Systems for more information (762-0321).

And for more information on Turning Technologies, visit the website: [www.turningtechnologies.com](http://www.turningtechnologies.com)

(Look for the "Higher Education" link, and then click "Turning Point")

## “Setting Boundaries” – An Opinion

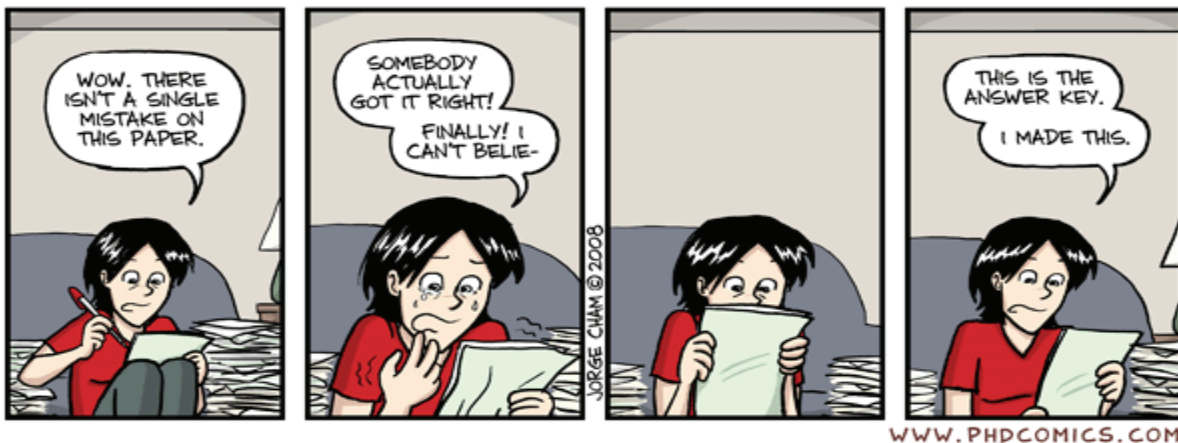
LindaLee Massoud

The February 2008 issue of the *Advocate* (NEA newsletter) contains a book review detailing methods for college professors to avoid overload. The six principles offered in the book are useful guidelines for all of us. In summary, they recommend that we clarify our values, become as efficient as possible in those important areas, and then reduce the time we delegate to other activities. Excellent advice.

The sixth principle, while correct, defeats the purpose for which many of us continue our efforts at the community college level. The author suggests that we “refer, defer, delegate when possible.” In particular, the book recommends that we avoid turning the teaching profession into a “helping” occupation by working individually with students in other-than-academic matters. Instead, we should refer students to various counseling and support services.

As a general statement, the author is correct. There are times, however, when students need that help that only we can provide. Particularly at Mott, many of our students lead “fragile” lives. They are juggling multiple responsibilities, and many are the first in their family to attend college. Because of our small class size, and their perceptions that we care, students develop a personal (or perceived personal) relationship with us as instructors and are willing to take the risk of asking us for help. We professors are the first line of proactive *offense* in the struggle to keep them in college.

Certainly, we should be prepared to refer students to the appropriate support services, and we should have those phone numbers ready to offer. But let us not forget that we are teaching at a community college *because* we care enough about our students to take a few extra minutes to encourage them to persevere.



## Suggestion for Student E-mails

While reading the Vol XXX, Number 13 (April) issue of *Innovation Abstracts*, I came across an excellent suggestion that not only makes the teacher's life easier, it also helps our students prepare to use e-mail professionally. The author asks students to create a "signature" to append to the bottom of an e-mail message that includes their full name, class, section, and phone number.

Although many of us have students put certain information in the subject line of the e-mail message, the idea of adding a very complete signature would help us service our students more easily.

In Webmail, click Options, Personal Information, then fill in the text box and choose the appropriate options at the bottom. It can be set to automatically enter the signature or add it only when the proper button is clicked. Every e-mail program offers the signature option.

# Upgrade your skills by attending these conferences!

## The Building a Strengths-Based Campus Conference

**June 25-27**

**Gallup University Riverfront Campus  
Omaha, NE**

Come celebrate your achievements, get updates on the latest research, and discover how Strengths Quest programs are creating a positive difference in the lives of more than 100,000 college students, staff, and faculty. You'll hear about "best practices" from fellow educators and learn strategies for using Strengths Quest and a strengths philosophy on your campus.

For more information, visit [www.strengthsquest.com/Content/Event.aspx](http://www.strengthsquest.com/Content/Event.aspx)

**The 2008 Conference on Teaching, Learning, and Civic Engagement**

**May 18 – May 20**

**Comfort Inn & Suites Hotel and Conference Center  
Mt. Pleasant, Michigan.**

The overall conference theme this year is "Engaging the Learner." This theme is designed to take into consideration that the best way to learn is to be engaged in the learning process. This may be done through techniques to engage the learner in the classroom and/or incorporating one of the many ways learners can be engaged in the learning process outside of the classroom.

For more information, visit <http://facit.cmich.edu/conference/home.shtml>

**Taking Critical Thinking/Problem Solving from the Institutional Plan Into the Classroom**

**June 4-6**

**Northwestern Michigan Community College**

**Traverse City Michigan**

A transformational workshop designed to guide faculty in the use of critical thinking as a classroom tool for teaching content.

For more information, visit [www.nmc.edu/cie](http://www.nmc.edu/cie)

**The 2008 Assessment Institute**

**October 26-28**

**The Westin Indianapolis**

**Indianapolis, Indiana**

The Assessment Institute in Indianapolis is focused exclusively on Outcomes Assessment in Higher Education and is designed to provide opportunities for:

Individuals and campus teams new to outcomes assessment to acquire foundation knowledge about the field, individuals who have worked as leaders in outcomes assessment to extend their knowledge and skills, those interested in outcomes assessment at any level to establish networks that serve as sources of support and expertise beyond the dates of the Institute.

For more information, visit <http://planning.iupui.edu/conferences/national/nationalconf.html>

**Culture Matters: Designing Learning Environments to Foster Cultural Awareness and Intercultural Competence**

**November 21-22, 2008**

**Sheraton Bloomington Hotel**

**Bloomington, MN**

The goal of this conference is to explore the premise that culture, in all of its manifestations, is emerging as a fundamental influence on teaching and learning in the 21st century. Not only must today's students be culturally aware and interculturally competent to be successful, but efforts to strengthen college teaching and learning can be helped or hindered according to whether cultural differences are taken into account. The learning-centered institution is one where reflection on diverse perspectives is embedded in its work—one where *culture matters*.

For more information, visit <http://www.collab.org/programsservices/conferences/conferences.htm>