Happenings at the
Faculty Development Center

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CONNECT Teaching Conference

Keynote Address February 10, 2022 @ 7:30pm
Conference continues February 11, 2022 @ 9:00am

As the CONNECT conference nears, the schedule of workshops and presentations is now available. The conference kicks off with a keynote address by Dr. Mays Imad on Thursday night and continues with a full day of events on Friday. A variety of topics will be explored during the day, and lunch will be provided. The conference will conclude with a student panel, where faculty will have the opportunity to participate in an open discussion with student panelists focused on the challenges and opportunities in teaching and learning within the last two years. This is a great opportunity to learn from your colleagues and participate in conversations about education at EMU! Please join us for all or part of the day.
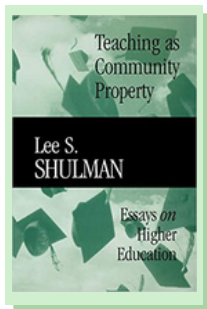
REGISTER TODAY!

Click or scan to QR code to register or learn more. Questions? Contact us at faculty_development@emich.edu
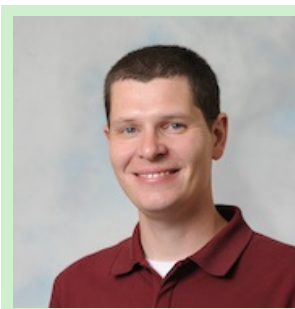
book spotlight

This week we feature **Teaching as Community Property** by Lee S. Shulman.

This work emphasizes the benefit of making teaching and student learning a more respected dimension of all disciplines.

click here to read the full spotlight or to check out this book or others from our library

teaching spotlight

Dr. Gavin Edwards

Associate Professor of Chemistry; Environmental Science and Society Interdisciplinary Program

click here to read about a teacher working to make science more accessible for his students

Teaching Blog #4 |
New Opportunities in Textbook Affordability

Dr. Nick Romerhausen

Dr. Nick Romerhausen
Associate Professor of Communication
School of Communication, Media & Theatre Arts

In Fall of 2017, when I stepped into my role as the Introductory Course Director for all sections of COMM 124: Foundations of Speech Communication, I inherited an assigned textbook that was popular and from a major publisher. I had used it when I taught the course for Winter Break compressed courses and it seemed like all the other textbooks I had taught from during my years as a graduate student—in a good way.

The countless introductory textbooks on the market all should seem like one another. Sure, some have brighter photos and some have more student-centric covers, but they all are going to have the same material for any introductory public speaking course. Chapters on speech apprehension, informative speaking, persuasive speaking, delivery techniques, outlining, and researching should be included in any text. So, the book we had worked just fine.

Over the next two years, I learned a lot from my graduate teaching assistants, especially when we were involuntarily moved to a "new" and more expensive edition by our publisher. Although we used the textbook for content and also directly connected it to writing and speaking assignments, the graduate student instructors were dismayed by the number of students who didn't purchase the book. Many hoped that a friend would share or that they could get by without it. At this moment, I didn't realize that in recent years something had changed in the way instructors at universities around the country were becoming part of a new movement in textbook affordability.

In the Fall of 2019, when I was struggling with how to get more students to access the text, I received a serendipitous email from Librarian Kate Pittsley-Sousa, who heads up EMU's Textbook Affordability Initiative. After a phone call and a meeting with Kate, I was intrigued when I learned that there might be an opportunity to find a zero-cost open educational resource textbook.

With textbooks classified as OERs, the authors hold copyrights but make their works available to be distributed to the open market at no cost to the consumer. Additionally, many of these books carry a license that allows users to add, edit, or delete content. They are inspired by the open source movement in software. Authors do not intend to make money; some don't even have the intention of being credited for their work. In the case of many authors, the interest has been in making information available to students.

I had to see if this was possible for us. I immediately had my graduate teaching assistants work on a textbook search with me to find potential texts by Googling terms such as communication, public speaking, open source, and open license. We found a very well-written book that was created in 2014 but had not been updated and looked like it was not going to be. There was a promising book from a community college that was written specifically for students at that school. We would be free to rewrite and change content as needed because of the open source license, but the laborious task of finding all the references to that specific college, rewriting the chapter on navigating their university's library system, and deleting or rewriting other nuanced references seemed to be too much. However, we

found some good candidates and finally in early 2020 landed on one from Dalton State University in Georgia entitled _Exploring Public Speaking_.

The authors have an open license and tell users directly on their website, "you can edit and add/subtract as you like, as long as we get the original credit and nothing is sold." The homepage has accessible PDF versions, rewritable Word versions, a Kindle version, worksheet templates for students, and rewritable PowerPoint slides for instructors. I emailed the lead author of the project and she told me that she would add any instructors who emailed her to a test bank supplement. I was sold. And I needed to be. I just finished consulting with a graduate assistant who wanted to know how to help a student in the Winter 2020 semester who did not bring their book home with them when they had to abruptly leave campus.

We piloted the text in Summer sections in 2020 and have used this text since then. Here are some of our highlights:

- Instructors can attach the text as a PDF file and attach this as a file in an email to students, on Canvas pages, and/or offer the link for other readable versions of the text if those are available.
- Our text is organized "like all the others," and of course, this is exactly what we want. The content is accurate, continually updated, and directly matches our Student Learning Outcomes.
- Because we found a particular book with active authors, we are now part of a community. The authoring faculty at Dalton State indicated that they had received a grant to support this process in making textbooks affordable, and therefore, they have an incentive to make a significant impact. I am on an email list with faculty from who use the text at other universities. A few weeks ago we all received updated and rewritable Powerpoint slides in a cool design that were specifically made to better match ADA standards.
- I haven't had to consult with any instructor about a student who can't access the textbook.

Of course, there are some drawbacks:

- Many books might have been written at one time or for students at a specific institution and may not have active authors who are involved in the continual management of the text. There might be texts that are incomplete, written poorly, incomplete or simply do not meet your course.
- Flashy pictures are replaced with stock images and some versions might not have much visual content since flashy images cost money.
- All books are Ebooks that are downloadable (usually as PDFs) so the nostalgic feeling of thumbing through a new college textbook, or even the smell of it, is gone.
- While I had success in finding this book for our introductory course, I have not fared as well in finding OER books for upper division courses. In our discipline, the books for foundational classes have open access versions as that seems to be where the most impact can be made on students.

Nonetheless, in my current experience, the "no cost" benefits significantly outweigh the costs. The movement of OER textbooks is clearly growing. More and more faculty are adopting the book I am currently using each and every year. Organizations such as The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation are funding more grants each year for this specific endeavor. Panels at conferences in our discipline (and I am sure in many of your disciplines, too) are addressing the topic. I encourage any instructor who is concerned about cost as a barrier to access to contact Kate Pittsley-Sousa and start Googling to see if there is something out there to match a course that you teach in your discipline.

What's Coming Up

Click or scan the QR codes for more info

Universal Design for Learning

Session 1: February 4|2-3:15|109B Halle and Virtual

- This four part workshop explores approaches in creating a learning environment for students with a variety of learning styles. From introducing more universal concepts to applying them in both the physical and virtual class settings, you won't want to miss this! Check out the link to learn more about the other events in the series.

Faculty Scholarly and Creative Activity Showcase

March 17|4:00pm-6:30pm

- We invite all instructors - tenured, tenure-track, emeritus, and lecturers - to display scholarly and creative activities disseminated/completed during 2019, 2020, and 2021. **Submit your information using the form on our website by February 17, 2022.**

Fulbright

February 18|3:00pm-4:30pm

- Join us for a session with EMU Fulbright scholars and a representative from the national Fulbright program to discuss the career-changing potential of this program and how you might submit a compelling application.

Transforming the Classroom Through a Wellness Paradigm

Are you interested in engaging in meaningful dialogue about the practical application of wellness and well-being in educational courses? A wellness paradigm will help to foster overall wellness for both the students and faculty and will yield academic, workplace, and personal success!

If teaching with a wellness paradigm seems valuable, we invite you to apply for this learning community today!

Applications are due Friday, February 4th Click or scan the QR code to learn more.

Addressing Misinformation, Bias and News Literacy

Session #1: February 2, 2022 @ 2-3:30pm
Session #2: February 22, 2022 @2-3:30pm
Session #3: March 17, 2022 @2-3:30pm

In the digital age where there is an abundance of material available to access, students can often feel overwhelmed when it comes to finding reputable sources. Through this three-part virtual series facilitated by the News Literacy Project and Sarah Fabian and Sara Memmott of the University Library, faculty will be provided with approaches to help students understand bias and identify misleading, inaccurate, and false information. An emphasis will be placed on integrating news literacy concepts in the classroom and building a knowledge of today's information landscape. The sessions are independent from one another, so if you are unable to attend one, don't let that stop you from joining us for another!

R E G I S T E R T O D A Y ! *Click or scan to QR code to learn more Questions? Contact us at faculty_development@emich.edu*