

Advice to New Faculty Coming from Industry **by Rose Anne Garcia Kings, Architect and OCC Instructor of Architecture**

I didn't immediately know the differences between "academic" and "voc ed" faculty when I joined OCC last year. It never occurred to me to separate the realm of ideas from the applied knowledge that allows one to make a living; but in the academic world, there are some distinctions. The most critical difference that instructors coming from industry should note, is that academic instructors have been trained to teach - - they are "professional educators" and most hold advanced degrees or certificates certifying their achievement. Vocational educators are usually professionals that have been lured out of industry for a variety of reasons, and we usually lack training as educators. Making the shift from the professional world to teaching can be challenging, especially since we lack formal training in instruction methods. On the brighter side, instructors from industry bring many special talents and life experiences to the classroom in addition to the resourcefulness and sincerity that characterizes most vocational educators. My advice is dedicated to you talented people coming from industry, and my hope is to help make your foray into academia a positive and productive adventure.

If you have been just hired from industry, congratulations! You have probably just been culled from a pool of talented people, and the reason you floated to the top is because you possess natural skills as a communicator and you expressed concern for nurturing and training the students who are drawn to your profession. You probably have limited or non-existent teaching experience, but that's OK because **you have the two key ingredients needed to make a good instructor - - you have a valuable body of knowledge, and you are open to sharing that knowledge.** My first suggestion for you is to recognize that these are your two most important assets as an instructor and to make a plan for developing and protecting these two assets. Determine what it will take for you to stay current in your area of expertise and establish key connections to your industry to maintain and further your knowledge. Assess your teaching assignments and start being creative about how best to structure and deliver the needed information and skills to your students.

Building Connections to Industry

Instructors from industry have a real advantage in education today. Students today are just too hip and too addicted to instant gratification to acquire knowledge through traditional book and lecture methods. Academic educators are going through a whole theoretical shift towards "career-based learning" and "project-based learning" where students are given real-world situations in which to learn and apply academic subjects like math and English. We vocational educators are already there. We specialize in real-world situations. Our challenge is to make those experiences come alive and feel real in the classroom and to get our students out into the real world. We are conductors

and much of our success depends on our ability to make important connections to our industry and replicate professional situations and standards. Hence the following tips:

INDUSTRY TIP #1: Equip yourself properly.

You need to get yourself settled into an office and have the necessary equipment to maintain your industry connections and support your new activities as an instructor. One of the rude shocks for those of us coming from industry is how poorly equipped full-time instructors are and how slow the system is to purchase and receive funding for equipment like computers and peripherals. Plan on using your own equipment for at least the first semester (adjunct instructors will not receive equipment). Access and print a copy of the CCC District Phone Directory from the OCC Homepage at www.occ.cccd.edu (Note this can only be done from an on-campus intranet connection, so ask someone to print it for you). This is your most important resource as you navigate through this maze of bureaucracy. Your immediate goal is to get the right computer, software and peripherals you need to manage your class schedule, assignments, grading, etc. Since you are new, people will try extra hard to get you what you need. So smile and ask for the moon. Start with your department chair or dean and as you get routed through the system, your handy phone directory will be essential. Things to ask for include a private office, a direct phone line with an appropriate range of long distance calling capacity, furniture that suits your filing and storage needs, bulletin boards, a comfy chair, office and printer supplies, reference and resource materials, parking permit, and access and keys to classrooms and equipment like faxes and copiers. Be direct and persistent with your requests. All instructors are eligible to receive incredible deals on software (ex. 96% off Microsoft Windows and Office) through the Foundation for California Community Colleges (www.foundationccc.org).

Once you get a phone and computer, get a campus email account and order business cards. Computer Services at 714/432-6495 can help you get an email account and set up a storage directory for you on the campus network. If you plan to use a laptop, they can also set you up with an IP address so that you can access your files from home. You can order business cards (bring your checkbook) from Alice Cross in the Administration Building. Make sure you know your official job title, phone number, email, and department fax number before you put in your order. The cards and email should help you maintain contact with your industry friends and help you make new contacts. Your goal is to get settled so that you can make the transition from industry comfortably and embark on your instructional career successfully.

INDUSTRY TIP #2: Do your homework.

You need to find out exactly what courses and content you will need to teach, so that you can prepare yourself. Ask your dean/department chairperson or whichever instructor has been most supportive to you thus far to help you get copies of each of the course outline/objectives on record for your classes. Make sure you have a list of your classes, an OCC Catalog, a copy of the approved academic calendar, and copies of all course schedules and syllabi that other instructors may have available. Next, insist on getting free instructor desk copies for all the textbooks you are expected to use.

Depending on the class and your hire date, you may not be able to select your own texts. The department or division secretary should be able to order your books for you or assist you. The bookstore hands out a free directory of publishers to new instructors so that you can order your own texts. If your dean or department cannot get your books in time, ask them to authorize the purchase of needed books from the bookstore. If you have to purchase them yourself or with department money, fill out a form at the back of the bookstore and save your receipts, since this money can be reimbursed once the free desk copies arrive. Now you will have all the available resources to start crafting your class. Your next challenge is to be brave and creative about structuring your classes to be in alignment with your industry. You were hired because you are perceived to have something important to offer the students. Look at your classes and find some ways to refresh and update the material and experiences. Don't just copy what has been done. Take ownership of your courses and inject your passion and knowledge into them.

INDUSTRY TIP #3: Invite your friends to class.

One of the best ways to maintain and build your network of industry connections is to invite industry people to give presentations, review student work, host field trips, or just call them to get their opinion on class activities or assignments you are working on. Most industry people are willing to help if you ask them to do a specific task or explain a specific problem you need help with. When you find people that are beneficial to your program, build a more lasting relationship with them by integrating them into your class, inviting them to be on your department advisory committee, and showing interest in trying to train your students to be hired by these professionals. OCC has excellent people who can help you locate and develop student internships and workforce connections (contact Susan Coleman in Career Connections at ext. 21005), a Job Placement Center that can help your industry friends locate people to hire, and a person, Doug Bennett, that can help you acknowledge donations so that your industry friends can get tax credits for their donations to your program. Keep that phone directory handy!

INDUSTRY TIP #4: Keep your passion and dreams flowing.

Keep up with your profession. You have invested a lot of blood, sweat, and tears into achieving a certain level of expertise in your career. Hopefully, you are also passionate about your new teaching career; but don't forget that you have a special knowledge or gift to pass on to your students. Students do not want to hear bitter war stories of the industry they are interested in, so find a way to give an insightful, yet positive introduction to your profession. Remember the passion of your youth and give these students the opportunity to see if this profession can ignite their desires and human potential. Students at OCC will come from many backgrounds and be at many different levels of maturity, so try to be positive and supportive. A great way to keep yourself inspired is to keep working in your profession part-time or seasonally. Ask your professional colleagues if you can tour their facility, see if they will hire you during the

summer, or contact Susan Coleman at OCC Career Connections and see if she can set you up with an instructor internship or with an industry partner. Susan is also the “grant guru” at OCC and can help you with collaborative grants with industry. Pursue what you love and share your adventure and experiences with your students.

Developing Your Skills as an Instructor

One of the challenges to instructors from industry is to develop their style and effectiveness as an instructor. My first advice to you is to throw out the canned lectures. In industry, we may have found ourselves mentoring or training other workers, but you have to remember that those people were being paid and they needed to learn what you had to say. Students are not being paid, they may not feel a pressing need to know what you are teaching, and they usually have a variety of learning styles or aptitudes. In all cases, you probably need to do more than assign bookwork and give lectures. You will need to find some more exciting ways to get information across and should look at some more visual or hand-on approaches to learning.

Instruction Tip #1: Acquire a varied repertoire of teaching techniques.

Train yourself to be an innovative and exciting instructor. People have different learning styles (there are many books on learning styles and multiple intelligences) and it is important for instructors to be aware and respect that all students do not learn the same way, and that successful instructors usually use multiple approaches to getting information to students. Without getting too in depth, some of the learning styles include social learners, visual learners, kinetic (learn by doing) learners, auditory learners, and intra-personal learners (people who can study written material and teach themselves). Basically, some people need to interact and talk, some need to see, do or hear it, and some like to take it back to a quiet place and study it on their own. The bottom line for instructors is that you should try to provide varied methods for getting through to your students and should incorporate more activities (group and individual) and visuals besides relying on written and oral information. There are some important resources available to assist you with your teaching needs.

OCC has great Multimedia service. The Multimedia people can assist you to operate the equipment in your classroom, or bring in needed equipment. OCC can support all multimedia formats (DVDs, CDs, VCR, slides, overhead projectors, whatever) and many of the classrooms are already equipped with computer projectors so you can incorporate Internet sites and computer presentations (i.e. Powerpoint slide shows) into your teaching. DIS (District Information Services, www.cccd.edu/dis/training/) has year-round training on all of the popular computer programs that can help you liven up your classes and basic office programs that you will find helpful for your schedules, hand outs, and grading needs. Make it a priority to take advantage of these helpful training services.

OCC Reprographics can do virtually anything, but you may have some department budget constraints. Make sure that your department administration has requested a magnetic copy card for you and find out what your department limits are.

Reprographics has self-serve copying, collating, and overhead transparencies in addition to a full line of color and other copying and publishing needs, which need to be left with a work order. Reprographics also has Scantron grading machines.

A last suggestion for making your teaching delivery more interesting is to invest in a digital camera and/or a scanner. Both devices will make it easy for you to project images and examples of real work and people on the job. It's also a great way to build a library of images pertinent to your profession, so that you can actually share some of your experiences with your students. A picture is worth a thousand words and it will help your visual and social learners catch on faster. DIS can help you in this area of computer use as well.

Lastly, you should think about how to vary your assignments to include a variety of learning activities. Plan on incorporating some group projects, project or research-based assignments, and/or student lead presentations or discussion groups. Success in the digital economy will be largely determined by one's ability to be self-directed, self-motivated, and be able to communicate and work collaboratively. Active learning activities are all good ways to get your students more engaged and focused on a profession in this changing world. This is an area I am just getting involved in, but I can already see that most of the students benefit from active learning methods. Students also network and build friendships when they are asked to work together, which helps them be more supportive of each other. OCC Career Connections people (Rita Jones at ext. 25672) can assist you with resources in these areas and can also help hook you up with other faculty members that can help you.

Instruction Tip #2: Get your students connected to the real world.

If you are teaching in a vocational area, then you are more than a trainer; you are also acting as a host to introduce your students to your profession. As a good host, you must not only provide the introductions, but you must also get your students talking with industry members. You also need to plan some "parties" or opportunities for your students and industry colleagues to meet and for your students to learn. As mentioned earlier, invite industry people to your classes and build relationships with them. Let industry be involved in training their future employees. Include guest lecturers, demonstrations, and industry review of student work into your courses. Create team projects that include industry members as resources or participants.

Another great way to get students out into the real world is on field trips. The District has a fleet of vans and buses at your disposal. You can submit a Field Trip Request Form online at www.cccd.edu/onthgo/forms/fieldtriprequest.htm and you should consult your dean and submit the request at least 4 weeks in advance (in case other approvals

are required). It take a little bit of organizing on the instructor's part, but a group trip to a site is not only a valuable experience in itself, but I have also found that the common experience gives the class an added point of reference and discussion that enriches other aspects of the class. For example, I took architecture students out to a model home sales site. Not only did our class have a running discussion and commentary about what we had seen throughout the semester, but also many of the students went to other sites and brought back more information and ideas to add to the class discussion. A well-timed outing is a great way to enrich your class and keep you and your students motivated.

Last of all; remember that teaching is really about people. We may have a lot of equipment and stuff we need to teach students to do, but we are really one person reaching out to help the next person. There are some wonderful people here that can help you, but it is really up to you to reach out and connect to each of your students and help them along. Good luck with your challenge! I can be reached at rkings@mail.occd.edu or 714/432-5623.