Center for Excellence in Teaching — **FIT**

REFLECTIVE PORTFOLIO – Eileen Karp, Fashion Design - Apparel

1. Define your teaching philosophy.

I liken my teaching of fashion design students with working with muslin fabric, an integral component and building block utilized in almost every apparel course. You may ask why, what and how this relates to teaching and learning. Muslin is unfinished cloth, ready to be coaxed and melded into a new form, novel function or a fresh approach. It is similar to what students first entering then advancing in their education encounter and explore during the always-evolving design process.

First comes the **warp** - the strong underpinning and foundational threads/ fibers that are initially laid into the weaving loom. These form the grain which has the least amount of stretch and become the backbone to "what we know to be true". This "warp concept" forms the introductory core of knowledge and techniques attained and embraced by students.

After the warp threads have been placed in the loom, the filler threads/ fibers, or the **weft**, take on their important role. These filler threads go over and under the weft threads in order to create the actual weave that makes the fabric. These weft threads make the connections, tying things together. These weft threads, by their very nature, have a bit more stretch because, in the process of going over and under the warp fibers to make something new, they generate more stretch and "give".

These two fundamental threads – the warp and the weft – are what initiate and develop woven fabrics. There are infinite variations in how the basic weaving function of weft over warp takes place to create the vast variety possible in the structure and potential outcomes of woven fabric. As students grow in their knowledge, abilities and explorations, they begin to see possibilities and start asking, "what if", "how do I", "is it possible to do" and "why not" questions. They connect their core course knowledge and experiences gained in fashion apparel, fashion art and other courses as they consider and critically think about their approach to the design question posed.

These basic concepts of weft and warp are just part of the picture. The new and unexpected element inherent in woven fabric structure is appreciating the new grain, set at a 45- degree angle to length and cross grain. Known as **bias** grain, this grain is unique in that it has the most stretch, the most give, plus the distinctive ability to mold, accentuate and enhance the body. This provides the excitement and challenge to teaching and learning. I see my teaching role as linking and sparking these connections to create a new tapestry, a new textural quilt with exceptional richness and imagination that goes well beyond the common threads at its base.

2. Have you ever observed a master teacher? If the answer is yes, what do you recall most from the experience?

In 2005, when I began my Master's degree in Education with its focus on Online Teaching and Learning, I had the good fortune of having Professor Marcia Ganeles as my first teacher at California State University East Bay (CSUEB). Initially thinking it would be similar to taking a correspondence course, I did not know what to expect in the online learning environment. Through Marcia's expertise, I soon learned that it was much more engaging and interactive than most any other type of learning I had previously experienced anywhere. In the process of learning from her, I became a much better teacher in the face-to-face classroom. Her vast knowledge and curiosity about the subject matter combined with her constant encouragement, her ability to listen, her empathy, her love of students and her asking of probing questions helped us think and express ourselves more deeply and with greater clarity. She had the innate ability to connect and share knowledge so that all learning styles were engaged. Marcia inspired and impacted me greatly. I have tried to model my teaching after her since that time.

3. Give an example of your most successful lesson. Why do you feel it was successful?

I am now returning to teaching in earnest after serving as chairperson and receiving release time for previous department roles, so I will go back in time for my most successful lesson (to me). It is one lesson that I have never forgotten. I was an adjunct faculty member teaching a 7-hour draping class at FIT on Saturdays. When demonstrating a draping (similar to sculpting using muslin fabric on a dress form) lesson showing "how to do it" to my students who had gathered around the "teacher table", I had my back to them. I was behind the "teacher table" and actually sitting on the floor so that my body was out of the way so that they could see what I was doing. I heard a flurry of high-pitched sounds behind me and stood up to find out what was going on. (I could get up from the floor more easily in those days!) One student who was deaf, Anna Acevedo, showed me through her sounds and motions that she could not see or understand what I was doing. I had to quickly rethink how I would teach this and subsequent lessons so that she could read my lips and see what I was doing. (FIT did not have the robust services of FIT-able at that time.) I turned toward the students and gave previews of what was to be covered, prepared handouts with written words and visuals, used the chalkboard / blackboard extensively, prepared step-by-step versions of all projects for this and all subsequent courses that I teach. I have taught this way since that time. I learned that all students benefited from these actions and would be able to succeed to the best of their abilities. I feel this was a very successful lesson because Anna took three different courses with me and remained in touch with me for at least 20 years. Most of the other students in that Saturday class also continued their studies with me in several other advanced courses.

4. Do you have an example of an unsuccessful lesson? How did you address the challenges?

Sometimes the successful lesson started unsuccessfully; see above answer in number 3.

In spring 2020 during the pivot to remote teaching and learning, I had to figure out how to best give the students an MFIT study room experience sans the study room since we had that visit scheduled for later in the semester. I learned how to develop a VoiceThread using images that I had painstakingly researched, selected and made into a PowerPoint – I thought! However, on the night it

was to launch, I discovered that none of my extensive recordings of each image had "taken". I had first put this together in PowerPoint using the record feature but that didn't work at all when I tried playback. I then did it again and used VT to record the next presentations but none of the voice recordings worked. In a panic, I reached out to Jeffrey Riman and Jose Diaz in the CET; unfortunately, it was after 5pm. I had to switch up my lesson for that night's class as I couldn't present this beautiful presentation as I had intended. Meanwhile, I sat on pins and needles for a few days as they had many other faculty training appointments during that intensive time. When we met for my appointment, I learned that I had missed one small step. Eventually, after recording one presentation in its entirety at least three or four times, I got it. By that time, my family - and my dog - knew the details of each slide/ image and I practically had each memorized!

5. Why are you introducing and/or expanding the use of technology into your teaching?

I have used technology in my teaching for several years where it is appropriate. I don't believe in using technology just because it exists. I want to use it because it helps to make me a better teacher and allows me to present the materials in a more comprehensive yet approachable manner to all students. I embraced Blackboard/ Angel early on, having used it and other tools for my own M.Ed. studies and original online course development for my thesis, and, subsequently, at FIT. I got so much out of the required resources posted in my class; having the ability to explore the advanced resources provided made it possible to go as in depth as I wanted to, with regard to a particular topic or area of interest. I think this approach is invaluable for all students. During this unprecedented time of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is clear to me that I must embrace and learn how to use and incorporate meaningful technology into each of my courses to enable students to learn and be engaged, no matter what the delivery method is.

6. How do you feel these technology innovations will affect the student experience? How do you think it will it will affect your experience?

I think the student experience will be enhanced when I make thoughtful choices about which technology tools to incorporate. Having so many choices from which to choose is sometimes overwhelming and I need to stop myself from trying out too many things. I need to focus and experiment with one or two, as I cannot become an expert in all of them immediately. I'm sure the students will feel the same way. Students will be spending a lot of time at their computers during this coming fall 2020 semester. That time needs to be well spent and not about the bells and whistles that are possible. It's the same for faculty. Good choices regarding technology will make each class meeting a time effective, rewarding experience for teachers and students alike, especially in the remote environment. My online presence must be effective and engaging from the very beginning of the semester in order to spark their interest and commitment to the course and program. Technology affords me the ability to be very organized with the materials and, in this way, benefit the students and help them learn. Students will be able to review videos repeatedly, which I imagine will help them learn the material better. They will seek my guidance more often; collaboration technology will make this possible virtually.

7. Please describe new teaching ideas you plan to implement as a result of this technology certificate program.

I look forward to using VoiceThread more extensively in each type of class I teach, both as a presentation tool and as a collaboration tool. I will explore using Screen-Cast-O-Matic, as that seems to be a robust tool that is easy to use. I am chunking and videoing my lessons then uploading to YouTube for captioning before sharing with students. I plan to significantly increase my online presence so that students feel like we are "live" in the classroom so that each of us develops engagement with each other in a natural and fun way, as develops in the F2F classroom. I may incorporate quick surveys or polls to see where they are in their thinking and understanding as well as to gauge their emotional well-being. I will definitely use Discussion Boards as tools of engagement and, if at all possible, Padlet when and where it makes sense and is beneficial.

8. How will these new technology tools/approaches contribute to your classroom practice?

I believe I answered this in questions 6 & 7. I hope to be more engaged and approachable virtually to the students. The technology tools I incorporate will enable and encourage collaboration and communication among and between us. Organization of materials and an understandable order of lessons and expectations will be critical for student success. Grading studio work online is very involved and time consuming. Clarity in my expectations for project submissions will assist me in that endeavor.

9. How will you evaluate the success of your activities?

This semester, I am teaching four different studio courses in different disciplines. Some, I've taught many times in person; one is an entirely new course for me and it's been awhile since I've taught two others. Because there are very tangible results and expected outcomes in studio courses, I will be able to best compare my teaching performance and student learning with outcomes from previous semesters. I will likely use a questionnaire in each course to see how students are doing in the remote environment and try to keep the communication between us as open as possible. I will encourage students to let me know what they need.

10. What do you consider to be the bigger picture items with regard to technology and learning?

The bigger picture items with regard to technology and learning in studio courses is that they are quite challenging to deliver. Hands-on learning and mentoring, plus providing meaningful feedback are considerably more difficult - not impossible, but definitely more of a challenge. In fall 2020, students who are at home, wherever that may be, and who may need to share the bandwidth or computers in the home with family members who are working or studying at home, will likely be at a disadvantage. Having a dedicated workspace in which to "study" and complete assignments may not exist. The digital "haves and have nots" in these cases are very real. Being on the computer constantly most days will likely be exhausting for students and faculty alike.

My teaching goals are to engage students as active community members while inspiring each of them to learn, grow and develop their understanding, imagination and creativity. Wise selection of which technology tools to incorporate may be a key component to achieving my goals.