

[Music]

[Michele] I am sitting with Dr. Diane Cherry of the Takoma park communications department. I want to welcome you and I want to thank you for participating in our personal is pedagogical podcast this morning.

[Dianne] You're very welcome it's good to be here.

[Michele] So why don't we start by you telling me about your educational and your professional background and your experiences?

[Dianne] Certainly um let me say that I started undergraduate school at the university of North Carolina at chapel hill several decades ago and I completed that and immediately to begin my Master's degree at the Ohio State University and then I worked for about three years, unfortunately that was during the time that uh government programs were being slowly but surely eradicated and that my job ran out, and so I went to back to graduate school to earn the doctorate in Mass Communication...Mass Communication research at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill so that's the education part. After completing that I worked as an English instructor at Saint Augustine's college in Raleigh North Carolina and at the university of the District of Columbia. In the district of Columbia I was chair of the journalism department at Norfolk State University for three years and having moved to this area was very happy to join the faculty at Montgomery college.

[Michele] Great so you had a very um varied background when it comes to the schools that you've worked for so how do you feel like these experiences that you've had, or maybe even some experiences that you had before you became a professor, how have they shaped your views on the classroom and teaching and learning?

[Dianne] Well one thing I will say about the varied experiences in the classroom I've had is that pretty much students are the same everywhere and that is comforting because there's a way to approach the education process that can meet each student where he or she is and there have been times when I would think that certain students would do less well on an exam or a paper than they did do because they were able to push themselves or I was able to get them to push themselves to do their best and so that was that's been the greatest thing that I've found is that students are the same and that when you approach them you have to approach them where they are.

[Michele] So that that leads into a good question, um what do you think is the biggest thing to consider as a professor where it comes to engaging students?

[Dianne] Well I think that students should be treated as other individuals, that is you can get close to someone you can understand someone if you know something about them, and even in these times of virtual education, it's important I believe for me to get to know get to know as much about my students as I can and let them know something about me also so, that um my students know I have a dog so if they hear the dog in the background, then they know it's nothing that I'm putting on them it's just something that happens and, and uh engagement really does I think come from um understanding and knowing as much about another person as you can, as you feel comfortable with, I'm not saying you know give them all your business, I'm just saying let them know that you're a human also...

[Michele] That there's a person behind the computer...

[Dianne] Right exactly, exactly.

[Michele] So was there any teacher that you had when you were school age or at the college or university level that had an impact on you and the way that you teach today?

[Dianne] I would say definitely at the undergraduate level it would have been my major professor of introduction to radio broadcasting um I love radio, radio is the best medium still on the planet even though we have many more. I learned all about not only the mechanical or electronic parts of signaling others over time and space but I also learned a little bit about how to engage and perhaps even influence listeners through the radio medium in my master's program. I would say it was my research professor who helped me understand that even I could do statistics for uh I never even thought I was capable, and that he used some strong and effective pedagogical tools to take me where I was and help me do what i needed to do to succeed in that upper division math program. At the doctoral level I would say it would be my journalism history professor who with his colleague at the time developed the theory of agenda setting, which is the way that I still see the world even these many years later, uh in terms of how media influence and affect their audiences, so I'm not telling them what to think, but tell them what to think about and those have been at those three levels those have been the three individuals who have sort of brought me to where I am today I believe.

[Michele] You mentioned earlier about um tick tock and um you know how you were learning, learning about what you didn't know about, and I have my own opinions on tick tock which shall remain nameless but okay, it does bring up a question, I'm all right with Tik-Tok, I just don't see me doing the dances I can't do those but um anyway how do you keep current in your um teaching practice?

[Dianne] Well one of the um best ways I've found most recently including especially over the last four years is the Montgomery, Montgomery College Professional Development program, and the ELITE offices, because there are courses, there have been courses over the past four years that have really taught me a lot about pedagogy and techniques and successful um, successful ways of doing my job that are uh current and um in and of the 21st century and in and of the virtual environment and ways of authentic authentically assessing students work, um via zoom and blackboard and all kinds of other uh tools that are available like YUJA, i think it's "YUJA" but anyway, um they've also been some opportunities for me to attend and or present at regional local and national subject matter conventions and meetings. And so any opportunity to work with colleagues from other places and other environments that can inform the work that I do is I considered a blessing and a way to stay current and stay involved and stay up to date with [dog barking] how students are learning these days I think it goes without saying that for the past year and a half students have been learning differently teachers have been teaching differently but, but there's still some constants across the board and being able to recognize those similarities and differences in the traditional ways of um teaching and learning has been very beneficial to me.

[Michele] You have been a professor for a long time so I...

[Dianne] Thanks a lot

[Michele] And you just...no that's not a bad thing I mean I, I would say at this point I've been an Instructional Designer for a long time. almost 20 years okay, okay so um my question to you is this, how has this there's...there's that dog

[Dianne] The puppy...

[Michele] He does not sound like a puppy there, Dianne though, he really doesn't...um so my question

[Dianne] He's a great big baby. He's a great big corso.

[Michele] Okay all right, um my question to you is how do you feel that, that because you brought it up in your last statement and how you keep current, how has the learner changed do you think over the past, I guess how long have you been a professor, I don't want to put you out there but how has the learner changed?

[Dianne] Well one way I think the learner has changed is that the student is much more technology, technologically savvy, um when I was still completely just a student and not a teacher student as I am today, the typewriter and the tape recorder were our tools of the trade and there was a certain elevation that we could feel because we knew how to, uh edit tape and nobody else knew how to edit tape and we could do this and we could do that. Well today everyone and anyone can become a reporter if you will with his or her phone, editing as they go along um [dog barking] giving the term citizen journalism a whole broader description because [dog barking] there's a there's also a very short learning curve I believe for new technologies and so not only do students have more technological information and capabilities, but they get to know things faster they are quicker it doesn't um no there's no reinvention of the wheel as it were um [dog barking] I think students are also much more cognizant of the world around them because there are so many sources of information because there are so many tools available to them, because you don't just have the three networks and a radio station anymore, now you have hundreds of outlets each of which can have a different point of view each of which can have a [dog barking] separate perspective and earners today I think are more adept at synthesizing all of those opinions and coming up with something that really explains and expresses who they are individually.

[Michele] That makes a lot of sense. So uh what are the classroom activities and practices that you strongly believe in?

[Dianne] Well, let me say that it's always helped me I believe to help students to become very expressive in class participation, class participation um informs students work on examinations, class participation I think informed students work on papers they have to write, of course now class participation is different from what it used to be um [dog barking] communication between student and faculty has taken on a different perspective if you will now we have discussion boards now we have uh classes that meet through the computer, now we have um grading of papers that happens on the computer, you don't have my red pen has been removed from me and I feel absolutely naked...

[Michele] Um I can show you how to use it...I'm sorry i didn't mean to cut you off [laughter].

[Dianne] see i see it up there but i just can't make it do what I want it to do, um and I'll be in touch with you to get more information about that thank you Ms. Knight. Um I think class participation especially in the in the field of communication is important because on the one hand, if one is if a student is interested in uh pursuing one of the many careers that communication is um known to prepare you for it's important to [dog barking] be engaged and be involved in your story idea, or your film, or your uh documentary or your podcast. On the other hand if you are interested in some other profession I don't know, like law school, or medical school it's important that you're able to express yourself adroitly in simple terms in ways that engage your listeners or readers and so class participation is worth a lot in my classes, whatever class it might be, and we do exercises and activities that address that level of importance that I give it. We use individual activities we use teamwork activities, we use written and oral activities to keep students busy and engaged and committed to this work over a semester.

[Michele] That makes a lot of sense in terms of, of your, your, your, your interest in that and that you're a communication teacher, that's really a good note on which to um end this. So, I want to thank you for the time that you spent with me this morning I really appreciate it.

[Dianne] It was certainly my pleasure thank you so much for not, uh letting midnight the puppy disturb us too much and it's been a pleasure

[Music]