

[Michele] So we are here with another personal is pedagogical podcast my name is Michele knight I am your host please introduce yourself to the audience and let them know what your title department and campus is?

[Henry] Alright hey how's everyone doing my name is Henry Caballero I'm a professor with the ELAP program at the rockville campus I've been there since 2001 so it's...I've been around.

[Michele] That is so great i've seen your resume so you have been here for a number of years would you share some of that with me your educational and your professional background and your experiences

[Henry] Sure so you're talking about before I got into M.C or

[Michele] sure you can start there

[Henry]Okay Okay well you know I started out not not I my dream was not to be a professor to be honest with you um I had a lot of different uh ideas um but you know being a teacher was not one of those um and then I, I got into a, a job where I was doing it was in a full-time permanent job. I'd already gotten my bachelor's degree and I was uh working on doing some videography work and some other things and so I started doing substitute teaching and you know I..I enjoyed the classroom it, it was it was good being a substitute because I didn't have to worry about lesson plans or grading so I would just pop in do whatever I had to do and then and leave and I get I kept getting calls back to different schools and, and uh the system was automated so every morning it seemed like I, I had a job to do um and being in the classroom so I was all the way from you know elementary school all the way to high school uh and, and it felt good um and so I, I started um teaching GED classes and, and ESL classes to adults at night um and then you know I I thought this is something that I would like to pursue it, it was good you know being in the classroom it entered for me it's energizing uh interacting with people um being able to share my knowledge and experience uh was always a good thing. So then when I was looking at graduate school of course I thought you know I'm going to try this the education route um and there was an opportunity for a fellowship to I guess to provide credentials and, and education for people interested in bilingual and ESL education and I I'm from the state of Texas and at that point this was like the early 90s there was a great need for ESL and bilingual teachers so I applied and was interviewed and was accepted into this program we were I don't know a core a cohort of probably nine, nine or ten of us um and so we took our classes together and, and it was really interesting a lot of those that were in the cohort had already been teachers full-time with, with teaching certificates and had been in the classroom for years. So it was a good experience for me I was able to learn uh alongside them you know are our uh what our content for, for the graduate program but also to learn from them their insights of, of the classroom um and so part of my part of my credentialing was to take um you know classes are like classroom management and, and a lot of it made sense to me and so i thought you know this is this is great I think I want to focus on this. So i stayed in Texas um was teaching adults maybe for a couple years I got my degree in and um and then you know my wife had lived in

the area in in Rockville and northern Virginia area before she moved to Texas and so she said you know let's would you consider moving back or moving over there and I thought you know why, why not. So we moved here in the summer of and i applied for Montgomery college um was, was given a temporary full-time position uh and so you know the rest is basically history I've been you know enjoying my, my time at mc of course and have been you know serving another other programs and, and other things with you as you know and, and other things that we've done other a lot of stuff you know going on campus so it's been very rewarding for me.

[Michele] We are very lucky i feel to have you here at Montgomery college and I have enjoyed working with you too Henry, um how do you feel that your background and your perspective have shaped your views on um teaching and learning? It's so interesting that you didn't want to be a teacher but you caught the bug by actually doing it as a substitute.

[Henry] Yeah, Yeah, Yeah well that's a that's a great question Michele because you know like I said I had never really planned on, on, um, on being a teacher and as far as my as far as being a student I was an okay student you know um I had my favorite classes of course where I put all my passion and energy, and then I had my classes where I just muddled through it because I had to get it done right to graduate um and that probably if you asked a few of my high school teachers whether or not they would see me as as a teacher they would have probably said no not that guy but anyway so you know I I've had you know different jobs I was just sharing with the student yesterday during office hours, because she was she's taking one class and um you know she's like I know I need to just get back into school and so much is going on but, but I know that I can't get the job I want I, I can't get the degree the, the career I want and be able to, to provide an example for my son unless I go to school and I said you know that a similar situation happened to me I, I've, I've worked in fast food I've delivered pizzas I've worked in doing all kinds of different jobs and I think that you know now that I'm teaching at Montgomery college I come into contact with, with students from various backgrounds and I feel that that I you know can, I can give some advice based on my own experiences of whenever I decided, okay you know I think I'm done with this kind of work I need to get serious and I need to buckle down and, and to decide okay I'm gonna go, go to school um so you know with all of those things that that happen, to know that education is a big part of our degree you know making sure that we finish our classes and do those things but there's so much so many other things that go on that help to shape us and so I, I hopefully I bring into the classroom my experience of, of not being a full-time student at times of taking uh you know it took me a long time to get my degree i didn't finish in four years um I did take some time off I, I uh moved back home and, and uh had some work and um it you know just so a lot of the same experiences that our students are going through. I, I feel like I you know have lived through that and can reflect that and hopefully they can see that hey you know if my professor did it i guess i could too you know.

[Michele] So yeah i think that's great because it, it does help i suppose probably inform your empathy in the classroom and you have that experience to know what it's like to be juggling multiple priorities multiple jobs not necessarily be a full-time student and it is I agree with you so important that the students see that so in thinking about that and, and that students are

probably looking at you now and you're having an impact on them what about you what teachers do you feel had an impact on you when you were school-aged or at the college or university who impacted you in your teaching style?

[Henry] okay okay well you know i there are probably a few a few teachers that i would that i would say i think the teachers who mostly paid attention and not necessarily lectured me on things or were great teachers of course all my you know any anybody who's in the classroom they are prepared they they know their content but i i think that the teachers who who i looked up to and admired and i felt a connection with you know the kinds of teachers that that you know look students in the eyes when they talk to them uh and the kinds of of teachers that were encouraging and that listened um you know there's all kinds of things that they go on and i saw some of this in my graduate program as well there were some very empathetic um you know faculty members and i think you know wow so here here's this person with the phd and has you know served in in national uh you know for the national education association you know doing work beyond just teaching in the classroom but that person actually sits down and gets on my level and you know talks to me that's that makes a big difference and so those are some of the things i can't really pinpoint the name of one or two uh but i do i do know in fact when i moved to maryland i had stayed in contact with a couple of my professors uh who were interested to making sure that i was you know following through with you know getting my job and writing letters for me and doing all kinds of things that helped me really get get my place at mc

[Michele] so are there any classroom activities or practices that you strongly believe in, [or] things i must do these things with my students?

[Henry] Yeah that's a good question you know um I think that discussion is really important I know that I teach accelerated classes and I have got my content I've got my lesson plans we've got to do x number of quizzes and they've got to write x number of papers um and and I feel that that starting discussions or having discussions in the classroom even if, if we don't agree on the on, on you know being able to listen to each other and to be able to voice um to be able to voice our opposition or our agreement I think is really is important is something that people need to learn how to do uh rather than just yelling at each other or using you know resorting to physical violence or something a lot of what we see in the media I think that I can I can accept you as a person and respect you even if I don't agree with you and so sometimes it you know by having classroom discussions and I encourage students to not don't feel like you have to agree with me. I just had a student I'm just talking about this because i had a student email me she had to watch the students have to watch a video and summarize and then do a reflection there's a summary response paper that they're working on but the response is going to be an analytical type response and she saw the video and she said you know sent me an email professor I'm not going to do well on this assignment, I don't agree with the person's views on the video and blah blah and I said you know you don't have to agree but that that's the whole purpose I think you have found the focus of this assignment is to say I agree or I don't agree and to be able to, to you know have organized ideas and clearly state why you do agree or don't agree with someone else's views that's really important, and so yeah I think that those are

things that I try to do as far as activities go, you know that's something that I wish that I got you know we could spend more time doing in our classrooms rather than just getting through the curriculum uh so yeah.

[Michele] It sounds like you're teaching your students to be global citizens, citizens of the world because that is so important to be able to take in a multitude of viewpoints. I feel like that's missing in our society today and even though you don't agree with them be able to express yourself respectfully collegially. People do they have a right to believe what they want to believe and you um you're doing your students a good service you're really preparing them for the world.

[Henry] Yeah i mean and you know with, with one I'm so proud and, and really I cannot express and how grateful I feel to be working at Montgomery College because we have such a diverse student body. You know the idea of global citizens I mean it's our classroom you know because we've got students with various um you know religious backgrounds and beliefs and come from different cultures have different linguistic foundations and, and we're all coming to you know to English 101 to learn how to write uh papers, and so but just having that you know in the classroom making you know having that resource available to us is important uh, and, and I wish that um you know I wish that more, more people and I'm sure quite a few but I wish that more uh high school students would see the value of coming to MC to take a couple of classes just to kind of figure out like wow you know this is this is a real college experience um because these, these are people that are maybe not my age, they don't look like me, maybe they don't they don't live in my neighborhoods or and, and you know being able to see what, what those what everyone else can bring to the table and even having their own voice is important for this, for this conversation you know for the global to have that that whole um, enriching experience to be able to say i am a global citizen is to actually live it.

[Michele] Right right i agree so what then would you say would be the most important thing to think about when it comes to engaging students.

[Henry] Oh yeah um empathy is really important and, and I feel like when students know that you value them that you respect them um I think that they, they tend to, I'm talking about myself as well whenever i take classes as a student what helps me to engage and that's kind of what i try to do in my classes as well um i don't lecture by powerpoint um and I'm not saying that that's i mean you know there are some some times when that is important and and it's, it's good to, to have that as one of your teaching strategies but uh I don't I don't know if that's going to be effective to engage students all the time if that's all you do um just like having these open you know discussions that you know I'm right now we're on zoom but if I were to you know sit down at my desk and just have conversations with students we can't always do that either. I know there's got to be some kind of a balance but students are engaged whenever, I'm passionate about what the topic is what the idea that we're trying to say I, I like to model for students provide samples my own samples it's a writing class and so if I assign a narrative I'm going to I'm going to try to, to do narrative writing myself you know even though I've got maybe some canned or prepared samples which are always, always good for students to see

what models look like. If i'm saying okay look we're going to write some dialogue for I'm going to try to model with them I'm going to sit down and say okay if this were my paper this is what I would do and O would uh you know write it on the board or you know type it on the screen now that we're on zoom uh to show them that you know I I'm doing this and I make mistakes just like everyone else but that's the whole part that's the part of the writing process to go back and say okay, ooh I want to change this word or I think I need to add a comment here or I want to change this maybe if I write the sentence differently it'll work better so I like to do a lot of modeling with them uh have them provide examples and for me to kind of shape that shape it with them , yeah.

[Michele] So let me ask you this henry i know that you do a lot of um cool things in terms of technology and other things how do you keep current in your teaching practice.

[Henry] That's a good question um I, I, I used to it's funny because i used to have um my children when they were going to college right so i used them I would I would ask them questions and and, and get their idea their input on certain um you know things to use as far as technology or other uh ways to be. I, I had an Instagram account um this was way back but in maybe 2015, 2016 because students would, would have you know it would write the agenda and then the homework on the board and then students would come up and just take a picture of it and I thought okay well that's great for that one student but what about everyone else so I had an Instagram account so that I could take pictures of whatever i had you know what whatever examples I had written on the board and or whatever homework that I would post to my Instagram account, uh but then you know uh Instagram became out of favor and ,and so people moved on so i had to move on to

[Michele] wait a minute i guess I'm still behind because i didn't know Instagram was out of favor now are you putting it on -

[Henry] Yeah, yeah i mean i don't know i had a few followers and then and then you know like as as the semesters maybe i did that for a couple of semesters and then I got to the third semester and people weren't following me so I thought well maybe it's just not worth my time and maybe they're not doing that really that's not that's not in you know like it's not popular anymore so I'm going to just drop my, my Instagram account so

[Michele] Well I read something last night somebody said that Facebook that they asked their kid about Facebook and they said well you know, Facebook is for old people, no Facebook is for very old people, Instagram is for kind of old people, i guess i must be one of those kind of old people.

[Henry] Yeah I'm sure they're still I'm sure that there's still some, some value to having Instagram but so having my having uh you know kids that were in college that was that was one of the advantages i guess i would run things by then um but now they're, they're not in school anymore so oh staying current is just so i look through my news feed I, I uh whatever, whatever algorithms uh are out there for my YouTube and, and other things like that and of course you

know you with it I teach English and so there's a lot of content available as far as lessons going to see what other teachers do um not necessarily that I would do that but that I, I could direct students and say hey you've got to go check out grammar girl or you might want to- we're talking about introductions maybe if you see this video this person's channel it, it will something maybe the libel will click for you then more than just me explaining it so I just try to connect them to other resources you know and so that's one of the things that i do to stay current is just to really see what is available to them um and, and to try to keep that updated because some of those videos from, from when YouTube uh you know first got started maybe aren't as, as, as nice anymore or as, as right the content is maybe can be presented a little bit flashier you know no more Instagram.

[Michele] Ah we'll see about that oh what do you think um you mentioned some challenges earlier for students what do you think are some of the biggest challenges for faculty in helping students to succeed.

[Henry] You know um I think that when, when a student when students are having problems sometimes they feel and, and this is this is based on, on some things that students have told me is i didn't know that you wanted to know that about me and you know like if the student isn't turning in a paper you know I it's you know what's going on is there something and I don't want to get too personal right it's their business but, but you know let me know if, if you're like behind work or if something's going on you know don't just don't turn in an assignment because then I feel like you're ignoring the assignment. But um you know if something's going on I think it's important that you bring that to your professor's attention I had a student see their midterm grade and dropped my class once without even talking to me and so I sent an email to the student and said hey I saw that you dropped the class, yeah I'm not going to pass this class I said how do you know you're not going to pass you hadn't even talked to me yet? And so i think one of the one of the challenges is that students maybe some students are under the impression that uh professors aren't interested or we don't we don't have the time or and, and you know I'm because all, all my colleagues at mc i mean everyone that I've I come across are so interested in working with students and helping them to succeed but i think that maybe this idea you know maybe it comes from where the high school teacher said oh your college professors aren't going to put up with that or they're not going to be interested in this or that you know or they might hear that from someone um and they don't feel like they can communicate you know with, with their with their professors and, and I always tell them this goes for any class before you make a decision like dropping a course or if you're struggling with an assignment please let your, your instructor know and you know um Emily, Emily rosado oh, my gosh, she is my inspiration because I know that how, how she connects with her students and so she is, she's my um i guess my the, the person that I would I would like to, to be I think okay what would emily say? What would Emily do you know in this situation because our students are there's so much going on, um and as i said before you know with my own kids I noticed how, how life is tough right you know we've gone through it and, and maybe because I went through it years and years ago maybe I have forgotten like what it's really like what it's like to maybe not understand an assignment, or to get stuck on something or, or to have something come up you know um and, and in my in my background and where I'm from uh

Michele you know your friends and your family they, they can also impose right like and you feel obligated it's like oh you know and that's you know that's some of the things that I try to share with young men is, is to you know to watch out for that because um you know we you have a different goal maybe than what than what your friend has and you can't always be there to rescue your friend or to, to a so you know you just have to you have to do some, some =, some you have to make your own choices about some things and so sometimes we, we get pulled into uh situations or we get pulled away from uh doing some, some you know working on our assignment and, and you know those are just things that I think that some faculty maybe are not aware of, um because we are we have you know we have stability in our lives and, and a lot of our students don't have maybe necessarily that stability um and so we just have to remember what it's like you know to, to, be in those situations and if and you know if we were fortunate enough not to have to live in those situations of worrying about you know the rents due at the end of the month I don't think I'm going to make it then maybe they need to you know to be a little bit more conscientious of where our students are coming from.

[Michele] I think it's so important for students to be able to see themselves as you were saying earlier in the faculty members and the staff at the college. I want to ask you this if you could go back in time is there anything that you would have done differently in your classroom teaching knowing what you know now as a sage professor?

[Henry] Oh as far as my teaching goes um I don't I don't know what one of the things that I do regret Michele, whenever I first got to MC and I didn't this didn't you know come to, to my mind until maybe just a few years ago I regret not getting a world map and putting a pin where all my students are from you know because I know that i have i have come into contact and i was just thinking about you know just the continent of africa how many students representing different countries you know uh north africa east west you know it in south africa i mean it's just like amazing um because students do come to my office sometimes um and and i think it would it would be great if they could see like i'm not alone there are other people that have come through this classroom as well and and they succeeded you know that's something that i put um in my welcome to students on my blackboard is that is that you know you're not the first person to come to this class uh there have been many others that have succeeded and you're gonna add your name to that list

[Michele] that's a beautiful sentiment and it's something to put on your instagram every Year but that is that is really really something to think about it's amazing to think i mean because i forgot how many um different nationalities of students we have but we have so many probably more than anyone else in the country it's a real real badge of pride for us as a school

[Henry] Right.

[Michele] Is there is there anything that I haven't asked you that you want me to know about your philosophy or teach of teaching or learning or anything else you want to share with the audience

[Henry] Um I don't know as far as my philosophy goes that that's hard to, to pinpoint I mean um I've done a lot of I've done some tutoring in the writing center and, and I do that so that I can get an idea when I teach my writing and grammar classes in the ELAP program or even in English 101 so that I can I'm aware of like some of the other writing assignments that come from other like health or they come from biology or they come from history uh professors I I want to have an idea of what, what are some of the writing assignments that are going to be given so that whenever I'm preparing my lessons that I'm able to, to guide students you know to an understanding of okay this is this is something that I'm going to use later this is something that I might see later in another assignment um I don't know if there's anything else uh related to my teaching I mean I'm like I said I'm grateful for you know for being at mc you know we have some fabulous colleagues we've got some awesome initiatives at the school that you're well aware of I mean like this podcast is, is great um and we you know I feel like if, if somebody has an idea at Montgomery College and uh you know you can get two or three other people excited about that and, and it'll happen you know and, and that's something that I don't know that happens on every um on every college campus you know I'm sure that there's all kinds of of stories from faculty members that aren't as happy with, with their work situation but I cannot say that that's you know that that's with me I work in a great department people that have a lot of heart for their students and so you know I'm just grateful.

[Michele] Well I am grateful to have had the opportunity to talk with you this afternoon Henry, I really appreciate it thank you.