There are a lot of dirty words that we just choose not to mention. They are generally solicitous, embody concepts we don’t like to talk about in polite company, and are only spoken in hushed and whispered tones.

Yet in the past couple of months, I’ve heard several “dirty words” whispered too often. It’s time to bring them to the foreground of what we do as a University, as they are important to discuss with openness and clarity.

Those dirty words are “Grading” and “Assessment.”

These words embody concepts that are difficult to discuss and are often surrounded by an air of mystery. Students seem confused by what constitutes an “A” versus “B.” At the same time, we try to be transparent and open about our grading policies for projects or tests. With creative work, “grading” may often seem more subjective and mysterious.

Continued on page 6.
Assessing Creative Student Coursework

Can we foster greater student creativity in the ways we assess student work?

That was the gist of a thought-provoking discussion topic that opened midway through the five-week “Adobe Generation Professional: Digital Imaging for Beginners” course offered on the Adobe Education Exchange. (The exact discussion topic wording was, “What is your opinion on assessing creativity? Is it your experience that assessment can actually foster creativity?” http://edex.adobe.com/discussion/e187cd/)

This professional development course is geared toward educators and is filled to the brim with ideas for how various Photoshop techniques can be used for student assignments to keep a class fresh and interesting. Even curriculum such as math, history, and science can benefit from using Photoshop, I learned, since Photoshop’s transform tools use geometry; histograms show graphic representations of photo elements; image resolution and dimensions involve area, measurements, and ratios; photography involves light; colors are represented in hexadecimal, vector graphics are mathematically based, creating digital anachronisms as a digital imaging project requires students to examine historic artwork and representations; a meme assignment fits into modern culture, and so forth. So by now you get the idea that there are numerous things students can learn tangentially when using Photoshop, above and beyond our teaching focus on techniques, design, and compositing digital images.

However, there are two related ideas that have especially excited my brain’s neurons – sending them into a frenzy of flashing and jumping, and firing a dance of questions, such as, “Can formative assessment be incorporated into our CoMAT curriculum more deliberately?” and “Is there a feasible way to focus less on summative assessment in CoMAT curriculum and still meet accreditation and other licensing requirements?” As a professor, how can my teaching and assessment approach foster more creativity and learning?

These comment-related goals of obtaining feedback from more of my peers by having my assignment posted early enough, and also making it eligible for the opportunity to potentially have my digital imaging assignment be selected for the next live online class session where it would get feedback from the leaders, too, has surprised me by how greatly this simple idea of receiving constructive feedback has motivated me to stay on task and remain engaged. This approach to teaching and learning has been more exciting and interesting to me than I’d anticipated.

The sharing from others has also inspired new ideas for creative assignments possibilities for my students.

Did you expect that learning gain and interest in the subject would be impacted most positively and significantly if students:

a) Received a grade only?
b) Received comments only?
c) Received a grade and comments?

My response when first watching this video was answer C. I was wrong! The correct answer to that multiple choice question is the first of the two things that got my neurons firing!

As this course has progressed, the second exciting thought was my realization that the two Adobe Educators presenting this course were also practicing formative assessment with me and my peers!

To earn credit for this course all required class meetings, lessons, discussions, and assignments must be completed by a certain date. However, that date is not until sometime in 2014. Now, while this class is still actively in session, each week’s assignment must be submitted and at least three other students’ submissions be commented on by a participant before the following week’s information is unlocked. And if a person submits that assignment prior to the next week’s live class meeting webinar date, their image might also be selected for the W.O.W. (Winner of the Week) award (and receive an Adobe memento) or be included in the next week’s presentation as one of the runner ups.

Would just a numeric score plus perhaps one comment have meant as much to a participant in this course or have had as long-lasting of an impact on learning and creativity?

Somehow, I think not.
After teaching WGD 260 – Web Portfolio a few times, Jonathan Agresta, Philadelphia Metro Professor and CoMAT Department Chairperson, wanted to find a new way to energize and engage his students when presenting their website portfolios. The standard presentation format was becoming dry and dull, especially for the audience with larger class sizes. So he set out to flip the presentation where the audience had the ability to explore student work at their own pace. At the same time, Professor Agresta wanted to make the event more exciting for the students, as well as the guests.

From there the Portfolio Poster Competition was born. Each student would create their own tri-fold poster that would be an extension of the creative theme developed in his or her portfolio. On the posters they could put samples of their work, screenshots of their websites, and extend their typography and color palette into the physical world. Each student would also develop a 5-minute “elevator pitch” that they could recite to each attending guest.

The format of the competition is simple - the students set up their posters in a classroom, along with a laptop computer showcasing their website portfolio. Members of the metro community are all invited, including deans, staff, faculty, students and local business owners. As the guests come through they stop and listen to each pitch, ask questions, provide feedback, give and receive business cards and, hopefully, form relationships with our students. There is no formal order or structure; guests are free to explore at their own pace and come and leave as they please. As the guests depart they are asked to vote on their favorite poster presentation and website portfolio. At the end of the session the votes are tallied up and the prizes are awarded to two students, one from each category, Best Poster and Best Website Portfolio.

The Portfolio Poster Competition has been executed twice so far in the Fort Washington campus, once in March and again in September, both with excellent turnouts and feedback. The students were all excited to see who won the competition and how well their final product was received. Not surprisingly, the winners were the most enthusiastic about their websites and posters throughout the course. Students often created their own business cards and supplied copies of their resumes to distribute at the event as a networking tactic.

The March 2013 Session winners were Jennifer Walking (Best Poster) and Christopher Porucznik (Best Website Portfolio). In the September 2013 Session both prizes went to Michael Ciavarelli for his portfolio and poster work. The students all received a certificate bearing the Dean of Academic Affair’s signature as well as their professor’s, and were proud to put their achievement on their résumés.

Professor Agresta looks forward to continuing this new tradition in the Philadelphia Metro for years to come.
Adobe Photoshop CS6 and Photoshop Creative Cloud now provide users with impressive tools to create motion graphic animations and export video compiled from layers within a Photoshop file. Creating simple animations and video within Photoshop previously was accomplished through the animation window in the extended version of the software. In the new versions, users will find the animation window replaced by timeline.

When opening the timeline window and selecting the “Create Video Timeline” button, users will notice a familiar frame and track based timeline. Toggle the dropdown triangle to reveal key frame tools for transform, opacity, style, and text wrap.

You’ll see each layer on a track. Click to highlight a track layer, chose a key frame tool, set the elements “in point” by clicking the diamond, move the timeline slider to the desired length, set the key frame “out point” by clicking the diamond.

Now move your layer element to the desired ending point. Drag the timeline slider back to zero or far left and press the space bar to view your animation! Export your animation as a video by selecting file>export>render video.

Interested in exploring animation and video techniques in Adobe Photoshop? Learn how to create an animated holiday greeting card with realistic snow effect. Download examples, assets, and a link to a tutorial video here: https://devry.box.com/timelinetutorial
Flavia Andrade, Chicago Professor, recently invited DeVry alumnus Stuart Furlong in to speak to her students.

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Adobe Session I Recording
Jill Gray, Presenter:
For those of you who weren’t able to join us for the Adobe session discussing Behance, Adobe Certification, opportunities for Faculty and Students, here is the link to the recording:
https://my.adobeconnect.com/p2lltaz9jmh/

PPT slides from the Adobe November 6, 2013 meeting can be download here if you’d like a copy:

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Adobe Session II Recording
Ryan Dietz, Presenter
DeVry Academic Webinar - InDesign CC, DSP, and Edge:
https://my.adobeconnect.com/p58yi8nd018/

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Important Links & Resources

November Session
CoMAT National Faculty Town Hall Recording:
The National CoMAT Faculty Town Hall Meeting Recording from Wednesday, 12/4/2013 at 12:00 PM (Noon) CT (45 minutes):
https://dvg.adobeconnect.com/p6fil6uvso/

November Session
CoMAT Feedback Survey:
The National CoMAT Faculty Town Hall Feedback Survey closes on Sunday, 12/22/2013, at 11:59 PM:
https://dvi.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_cABnAGxrt0J0QDsl

Did you know?
Flavia Andrade, Chicago Professor, recently invited DeVry alumnus Stuart Furlong in to speak to her students.

See the video here: Stuart Furlong
Dirty words continued...

As the University moves towards a wider review of student academic progress in order to “Assess” student learning (another use of that “dirty word”), it becomes important not only be transparent about “grading,” but to make certain that the grading standards are applied consistently across the board.

In the past couple of months these “dirty words” seem to have been bantered around a lot more among faculty and the Media Arts & Technology Deans: we’re actively involved in routine “assessment” activities and data gathering; we’ve heard about faculty developing grading rubrics to promote transparency; we’ve learned how faculty give feedback using tools like Screencast-O-Matic; and even Pearson and eCollege seem to think this is important, as they have started to introduce “Rubrics” into the Gradebook.

What we do know is that transparency, clarity, specificity and a consistent approach to evaluation provides an antidote to the mystery of “grading” and “assessment.” With the tools and rubrics that we strive to develop with you, we will extend the learning process to evaluation and feedback.

So how do we remove terms and concepts from our “dirty word” list? We address them head-on and talk about them openly. This issue of the newsletter does just that, providing links to our recent National Faculty Town Hall Forum.

We look forward to engaging you further in developing more transparency in our grading and assessment, and we look forward to an ongoing dialogue with you about how you address these concepts with clarity and consistency.

Season’s Greetings

Happy Holidays from your CoMAT National Team!

The Holidays are a time to reflect and refresh as we contemplate the past year and peer into the New Year.

Just for a moment, contemplate how you have shaped the future entrepreneurs and leaders of tomorrow with your teaching excellence. Take time to reflect on the encouragement you have provided to so many students pursuing their dreams.

As you teach into the sunset of 2013, we want to thank each and every one of you for your service to our students.

Be safe and we will see you as the sun rises on 2014

Elio Arteaga, CoMAT Associate Professor in Miramar, Florida demonstrated recently how he provides qualitative assessment.

See the video here: http://screencast-o-matic.com/watch/clXO3UVSe4