

OCTOBER 1, 2021

# FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

**Collaboration is the key to innovation.**

**Dr. Dan Koger**

**GUEST  
SPEAKERS**

Thank you, Dr. Koger, for your willingness  
to share and collaborate!



## **Inviting Guest Speakers into your Classroom**

Welcoming other voices into your classroom is one way to bridge the divide between academic and professional silos. Guest experts can bring a new perspective to your discussion and/or validate the real-world impact of your curriculum for students. They can discuss recent trends, examples of best practices, and emerging technologies in the field as they help you link theory with practice. Their personal stories are more memorable than facts or statistics. This classic pedagogical strategy is more flexible than ever with the technology available today. If guest speakers join your class synchronously via Google Meet, there are no geographical restrictions to limit who can join, and the session can still be interactive. These sessions are most effective when you are present and prepared to moderate and facilitate the discussion. Careful preparation with the speaker includes clear communication about the curriculum, the level of the course, expectations for questions, and the time frame for the session. Student preparation will include studying material, learning about the speaker and how his or her experiences align with course content, and developing questions.

## What motivated you to invite guest speakers into your classes?

Mark Twain is credited with defining an expert as "An ordinary fellow from another town." Years later humorist and social commentator Will Rogers added that an expert is "A man fifty miles from home with a briefcase."

Over my past 14 years on the communication faculty at Lindsey Wilson College I have found both quotes to be true, with the added discovery that those out-of-town experts—guest lecturers in the vernacular of academia—do more than just share facts.

In my experience guest lecturers are far more than just visitors from nearby, and, importantly they are not only men. Far from it.

## How do your students benefit from exposure to guest experts?

First, visitors capture the attention of my students in ways that I can't always do as the classroom authority figure and the person in the front of the room, class meeting after class meeting, all semester long. Like all of you out there, I try to keep my classes interesting and my students engaged, using all manner of teaching techniques: group activities, simulations, and any other teaching method I can find to ward off drooping eyelids and heads on tables, especially in those challenging hours between lunch and the start of practice for sports, band, cheerleading and the dozens of other after-class activities that heap so many demands on the time, energy and attention of our students.

Second, a simple truth is that guest lecturers and visiting experts in my classes often know more than I do about specific elements of a subject we might be studying. That's often why you invited them to your class in the first place. Those "experts from a nearby town" can bring fresh and compelling insights to your students that enhance the concepts you want them to learn.

Third, visiting speakers can provide concrete validation of many of the topics you are teaching. This was especially true for three of my visitors.



## Tales from the "real world" of manufacturing:

Michael Rodenberg is Chairman & Chief Executive Officer at Murakami Manufacturing, an award-winning maker of high-tech rearview and sideview mirrors for Toyota, Nissan, and other auto brands.

Michael was one of those fellows "from another town" when he came to one of my group communication classes several years ago. In Michael's case, the other town was Campbellsville, but there the relation to Twain's expert ended. Michael, far from "ordinary," speaks Japanese and is intimately familiar with Japanese manufacturing practices.

He discussed with my students a concept I had referenced often in the course—kaizen, or continuous improvement. Michael was able to take my students through actual applications of kaizen as a fundamental principle of manufacturing at his plant. Michael told how small groups of his employees meet daily to discuss the previous day's experiences on the plant floor and what they might learn from those experiences to continuously improve productivity and quality.

Importantly, through sharing his tales of kaizen and communication in the management of real-world challenges, Michael confirmed for my students that I wasn't making that stuff up, that I was teaching them verifiable concepts that would be valuable in their coming careers.

## From Russia with love:

One day while Micki Carter and I were students at the University of Missouri School of Journalism in the 1960s, I asked her what she had done over the summer between our junior and senior years. "I read *Crime and Punishment*—in the original Russian," she said, not an assertion you're likely to forget.

When I was assigned to teach intercultural communication several years ago, I remembered Micki and her expertise regarding all things Russian, so in the fall of 2019 I invited her to meet with my students and she enthusiastically agreed to a visit. Micki came from considerably farther away than Campbellsville. She is the former executive editor of the *San Mateo Times*, a daily newspaper in the San Francisco Bay area, where she still lives.

While pursuing her newspaper career, Micki had continued to expand her knowledge of Russian language, history and culture and had been the author of two books on Russia, one on the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. Her latest, *From Under the Russian Snow*, is an authoritative and moving memoir of the year, 1995, that she spent in Russia on a grant from the U.S. Information Agency teaching American newspaper principles and production techniques for Russian editors scattered over eleven time zones of that sprawling country.

She shared with my intercultural communication students a treasure trove of her personal experiences among the Russian people, narratives seldom found in textbooks.

But there was more. Her journalism background made her a natural fit to meet with my public relations students. As it turned out, she met with all my classes on the day she was at the college, including my group communication and public speaking students. To top this off, she finished her visit, I am pleased to report, at one of Kara Mollis' women's studies classes, where she talked about the roles and challenges for women in Russia, 25 years ago and today.

## The wonders of Google Meet:

Cost and time can be a challenge in booking guest lecturers. Micki is retired from her newspaper work and her husband is a retired United Airlines captain. So she and Mike could fly to Kentucky at no cost. My friend and fellow communication consultant, Roger D'Aprix, lives in Rochester, NY, and couldn't fit a visit to Columbia, KY, into his schedule late in the fall, 2020 semester. At that time, though, all our classes were online, so bringing Roger and his communication expertise to my students was possible through the wonders of Google Meets. Roger spent class sessions with my group and intercultural communication students, sharing stories of his work with some of the largest organizations in the world, and along the way again validating what I had been telling my students for the previous several weeks.

## There's no place like home.

Michael, Micki, Roger, and many of my other guest speakers over the years came from off the campus. But we also have a wealth of potential guest speakers here at the college.

For example, the incredibly energetic Laura Burwash, LWC's Director of Career Services, is also an expert on personality profiling and does a riveting and highly interactive presentation on understanding your personality characteristics and the characteristics of others. She has visited with all my classes every semester for the past several years.

Sabine Eastham, Director of the International Student Program, and a native of Germany, has met several times with my intercultural communication students sharing her insights on how to appreciate the value and challenges of cultural diversity.

Duane Bonifer, the former Director of Public Relations at the college, made frequent visits to my public relations classes, helping them understand the many realities of media systems in the digital age, where anyone can become an online publisher.

I could go on but I think you get my point. Knowledgeable and stimulating experts don't have to come from "another town." To reach many of them, you may not have to go beyond the staff telephone directory.

## PRACTICAL TIPS FOR



[TEACHING WITH  
GUEST SPEAKERS](#)

