## TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

In receiving a letter from a local college confirming an invitation to teach an advanced web design course, I realized I was about to embark on a new dimension in my career. I had been preparing for this. It was the basis for my decision to attend graduate school. When my thesis committee recommended I take my research into a doctoral program, I was enthusiastic, but I soon realized there were not many Ph.D. programs geared for designers, especially with my interest in design history. Why would a designer need a Ph.D. anyway? As my research open new opportunities for me in academe, I realized that my designs were maturing to another level. Not only was I studying Updike, Rogers, and Dwiggins, but also recognize that the leaders in new media are scientists changing the way we do business. I now realized that not only should I be teaching my students functional design, so that they develop a solid knowledge of the process, deadlines, and budget, but also as an educator, should be exposing them to a new level of academics from outside of the traditional sources.

It is my responsibility to prepare students for the reality of the professional environment without diminishing their enthusiasm for the process. As an exercise in logo design I ask students to "abstract to the meaning" (Hiebert), by asking them to turn the complex into understanding by "leaving out" and making the message clearer by not "showing all." Thumbnails due under tight deadlines force a student to think about building solutions quickly, and expose them to the conditions of real-life work. Developing brainstorming sessions in a true team environment encourages students to recognize not only their own strengths, but to respect others' expertise, and how teams can elevate the individual. If cultured properly, the hard work of brainstorming can be exhilarating, and help a student to accept failure as just a momentary pause before continuing on to the solution. It is an act of learning to draw with your eraser as much as your pencil.

Celebrating success is important. Creative people cannot work for just a financial payoff. They require the exhilaration that comes with the birth of a solution. They often deplete their internal energy fighting for that solution. As a teacher, I hope to rejuvenate and inspire students, and to provide them with the skills to work this out for themselves. Students who understand how to enjoy the process, learn the reward becomes the process. It will not matter what skill level or

degree of talent they possess, the process is fulfilling, and in turn, they will dedicate more to it. The resulting work will naturally become better.

Teaching is a perpetual education. If students are not succeeding, I try another approach, or several approaches. Teaching has been my priority for the past ten years. I accepted positions that required teaching over scholarship and do not regret this. But now, especially with the changes we see not only in design, but even more so in journalism and advertising, and the role design now plays in these disciplines, my scholarship takes on new meaning. I miss it, and my student's need it.

Over the past ten years, and working my way up through different types of institutions, I've worked with all levels of students. Some of my students find it difficult to compose a proper sentence, or are terrified at the thought of building a path with the pen tool. Other's posses such energy and talent I worry about my role, I don't want to interfere with their ideas, their ability to develop fresh concepts and look at the things in a new way. Often I will have both in the same class, so I work with a flexible bar in expectations for progress, but not in outcome. I don't want a student struggling and discouraged, nor do I want one bored and unchallenged. My goal is also for some of their best class moments to happen outside of the class, when that light bulb goes off, or that point kicks in. Nothing is better than receiving a text message from a student at an AAF conference commenting on a speaker saying the most important element in the work is the concept.

I hope the students who are entrusted into my hands will benefit not only from my professional and academic experiences, but also from my enthusiasm for the continual flux in the profession. Though I have been classically trained in typography on a letterpress, and hold a fondness for the elegance and quality of such work, I find the iPad, and the possibilities for redirecting how we read a book with such devices as exciting. Designers today have the opportunity to create a digital incunabula. Most of all, I hope they experience the creative high that comes with the solution, a joy I feel when I design, when I learn, and when I teach.