Teaching Online

NEA Higher Ed calls for papers and proposals!

What happened when MOOCs came to San José State?

Academic freedom: Good news from the courts

Serving student veterans on your campus
HERE A MOOC, THERE A MOOC
At San José State this year, faculty asked the right questions about MOOCs.

THRIVING IN ACADEME
Learn how to teach online using your particular strengths.

WHY I AM A MEMBER
The Campaign for the Future of Higher Education examines the profit in for-profit online ed.

THOUGHT & ACTION
“MOOC Mania”

THE STATE OF HIGHER ED
Why I’m a member

CASE STUDIES
News on academic freedom.

OP-ED
Better service for the veterans in your classrooms.

Thought & Action Call for Papers: “The Business of Education.”

As Private Interests increasingly penetrate public spaces, and as so many “reformers” seek to corporatize the common good and make education their business, the review panel of Thought & Action journal invites responses for a special focus section, “The Business of Education.” Responses may offer strategies for collective action to benefit our students and our nation, follow the big money of small-minded reform, empower our contingent colleagues, and show us how to reclaim the “public” in public education. All submissions will be entered into the competition for three $2,500 “Excellence in the Academy” awards. The deadline is March 1, 2014. For more information, visit nea.org/thoughtandaction.

See you in St. Louis!
Papers and proposals...

Save the date for the NEA Higher Education conference to be held March 14-15 at the Renaissance St. Louis Grand Hotel. This year’s theme is: “Raise Your Voice: Activist Scholarship, Social Change and the Future of Higher Education,” and organizers hope you will offer proposals and papers to support that theme. Suggested topics for proposals and papers include: organizing; member recruitment and engagement; pedagogy; policy, and more. In particular, the conference should address the work done by faculty, students, staff, and support professionals to create a more democratic society. The deadline is January 7. For more, visit www.nea.org/he.

2014 NEA Human and Civil Rights Awards: Nominate a colleague!

NEA’s Human and Civil Rights Leaders are looking for individuals or groups who have advanced the cause of human and civil rights. They honor these civil rights heroes each year because the cause endures, the struggle goes on, and hope still lives. To nominate a colleague, either individual or group, visit http://www.nea.org/grants/34602.htm for a nomination form and guidelines.

Missed something?
Read previous articles on our website

Campus Equity Week
The 2013 Campus Equity Week may be over—but that doesn’t mean our efforts to bring equity to academic labor are done! Visit the campus equity week website to sign petitions and get new resources for your ongoing work. campusequityweek.org

U.S. Labor Grants for Community Colleges
A whopping $475 million in workforce grants will pay for innovative job training programs. www.educationvotes.nea.org/2013/10/10/

Immigration Reform: Needed Now!
Millions of students want to contribute to the country they love. They need immigration reform to do it. www.educationvotes.nea.org/2013/10/08/

Obama Sets Stage for Higher Education Act
During his late August tour, Obama talks about making higher education more accessible and more affordable. www.neatoday.org/2013/08/29/

Why I’m a Common Core Advocate
Read one teacher’s personal statement of support for the Common Core State Standards. www.neatoday.org/2013/09/19/
As the massive, open, online courses known as MOOCs grow exponentially in number, as millions of students enroll and as dozens of colleges and universities make big-money deals to jump on the bandwagon, MOOCs have been widely applauded as the latest and greatest innovation in higher education. But here’s the critical question: *do they actually work?* That question hasn’t been much asked, except by faculty. But, as a report released recently by San José State University shows, the answer is likely yes for a few students, and no for many, many more.
The promise of MOOCs is this: They’ll deliver no-cost higher education to far-flung students around the world, solving the very serious problems of college access and affordability. In the New York Times, columnist Thomas Friedman called it the “MOOC revolution,” and it said it was “real and here.”

It’s here, for sure. To date, around 4.7 million “Courserians” have enrolled in courses through Coursera, a for-profit technology company partnering with more than 80 universities, including the University of California system and Georgia State University. Meanwhile, the MIT-Harvard non-profit collaboration, called “edX,” has surpassed 1 million students.

But is it real? The experience of students and faculty at San José State University (SJSU), where administrators rushed into a deal last year with Udacity, the for-profit ed-tech company from the inventor of the self-driving car, says maybe not. Earlier this summer, after SJSU students in three Udacity courses showed incredibly dismal passing rates compared to students taking the same subjects face-to-face with SJSU professors, the university announced it would “pause” its partnership. Last month, a SJSU report on the experience raised questions of how or why it could ever start again. Meanwhile, faculty members are organizing to ask questions and raise concern among students, lawmakers, and the public.

“The huge issue that faculty have is that this is being touted as a one-size-fits-all solution,” said Jonathan Karpf, a lecturer in biological anthropology at San José State and also a member of the board of directors of the California Faculty Association. Obviously, given the demonstrated passing rates, it’s not a solution for vast numbers of students.

At San José, administrators entered into two agreements with MOOC providers. One, with edX, enabled engineering students to watch MIT course lectures online, and then attend classes with a SJSU professor who engaged them in questions and worked with them closely. Passing rates showed students did better than those in traditional classes.

That kind of blended or “hybrid” approach was recently endorsed by NEA’s new digital policy statement, approved in July by the NEA Representative Assembly. (To read it, visit: http://www.nea.org/home/55434.htm)

The policy says NEA supports the use of educational technology, and embraces its great potential in improving student learning and closing achievement gaps, but also makes clear that decisions around digital learning must be made by the people who know best—and that’s not for-profit “educational industry” vendors—it’s educators.

The second SJSU-MOOC agreement was a no-bid contract with Udacity to offer three for-credit, online-only classes in developmental math, algebra, and statistics to SJSU students and others, mostly high-school student, who paid $150 each. That partnership was acclaimed as a “game-changer” by SJSU President Mo Qayoumi at a glittering January press conference attended by California Gov. Jerry Brown and Udacity founder Sebastian Thrun.

But just months after that press conference, it became clear the play had been fum bled. At the conclusion of the spring semester, just 25 percent of SJSU students had passed the online-only algebra class, compared to a long-term average passing rate of 65 percent among SJSU students who take that class face-to-face with professors. In none of the three Udacity partnership courses did more than half of SJSU’s students pass. (It’s unclear how many of the non-SJSU students passed, but presumably high school students would not have done much better.) Four out of five students told surveyors they wanted more help with the content.
At What Cost?

Not much research has been completed around the efficacy of MOOCs. As Michael Gecan recently wrote in the *Boston Review*, “I heard about a boy in Mongolia who took a poetry course through an Ivy League online offering. Now, I’m glad that he had the chance... And I hope more have the opportunity. But, as scientists love to say, the plural of anecdote is not data. And it is reasonable to suggest that we need to see more data about the impact of MOOCs over time.” What research is available suggests SJSU’s experience is not an anomaly. It’s generally accepted that about 90 percent of MOOC students drop out. It’s also becoming more clear that the better the student, i.e., the more experienced and more successful in previous college courses, the better he or she will do in a MOOC that offers so little in the way of one-on-one support. The least experienced students do worst.

You can call this a great “experiment,” but what happens to those students who failed, asks Karpf. “One of the issues being raised by faculty is this idea that you have to ‘fail to succeed,’” which you hear in the language from Thrun and, to a certain extent, our provost and president. What’s being called into question by faculty is that we’re talking about real students. What happens to those students who took these classes, rather than face-to-face classes, who are now set back in their academic careers? They’re like collateral damage and there’s no sense that this is a real cost in this experimental approach to higher ed."

During the summer, SJSU administrators pointed proudly to improved passing rates in the Udacity classes: 72 percent in algebra, a still-lousy 29 percent in development math. But they didn’t draw attention to the dramatically different student demographics. More than half of the summer-semester students had already graduated from college, compared to none in the spring. Also, students taking online exams in the summer were prompted with “hints” to exam questions. “If we gave hints in our face-to-face classes, we might see higher passing rates too!” Karpf said. In July, the Udacity partnership was suspended.

Meanwhile, SJSU faculty across fields and disciplines have galvanized in their collective desire to provide a high-quality, personalized public education for every student. Earlier in the spring, a group of philosophy professors wrote an open letter to Harvard professor Michael Sandel explaining why they refused to use his MOOC on “justice” with their SJSU students. Among their reasons, they said, “Should one-size-fits-all vendor-designed blended courses become the norm, we fear that two classes of universities will be created: One, well-funded colleges and universities in which privileged students get their own real professor; the other, financially stressed private and public universities in which students watch a bunch of video-taped lectures and interact, if indeed any interaction is available on their home campuses, with a professor that this model of education has turned into a glorified teaching assistant.”

Meanwhile, an ad hoc SJSU group calling itself the “Faculty for Quality Education” recently convened a public forum, and the California Faculty Association continues to provide resources and support around these issues.

“It’s at least partly about knowing what questions to ask,” said Karpf. And those include: “What are the motivations here: Is to enhance learning? Is it to provide a quality education? Is it vetted by faculty or generated by faculty? Who controls the intellectual property? Does it involve outsourcing to a private, for-profit company?” Having a good collective bargaining agreement also helps, Karpf noted.

*By Mary Ellen Flannery*

Editor, NEA Office of Higher Education
mflannery@nea.org
A Strengths Approach to Online Teaching

Too often we approach new tasks, especially in the area of technology, by focusing on what we cannot do. Sally Kuhlenschmidt envisions how teaching an online class would proceed if we started from our particular strengths.

How can you use your strengths to improve the quality of teaching online?

“Education should instill in us an informed comprehension of our past, an engaged connection to our present, and a joyous sense of confidence in our future.” — Susan Saltrick (1997)

Not all recent revolutions have been technological. Since 2000, a subfield of psychology called “positive psychology” has categorized universal human strengths and identified ways of using this knowledge to enhance our lives, our performance, and our enjoyment of our work (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). These universal human qualities, called character strengths, are the building blocks of an effective, happy life—and can also influence your approach to online teaching.

The task of learning to teach online has typically been approached as one of learning specific technology, or of how to apply instructional design or pedagogical principles. These approaches can miss the individual qualities of relationship that keep students in the learning situation and build a community. Join an exploration of positive psychology and learn how shifting to thinking about strengths, instead of weaknesses, can help you succeed in this journey.
What is a character strength?

A character strength is a capacity to engage in behaviors, thoughts, or feelings that are constructive or health enhancing for oneself and others. Your particular strengths are likely to be reflected in your first response to any situation.

The research generated 24 strengths clustered into six categories. This is referred to the VIA Classification of character strengths and virtues (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). The VIA Classification is as follows:

1. **Wisdom and Knowledge**—intellectual capacities, such as perspective, curiosity, love of learning, judgment and creativity, which help in acquiring and using knowledge.

2. **Courage**—emotional strengths, such as honesty, perseverance, zest, and bravery, which call upon capacities leading to goal accomplishment despite obstacles.

3. **Humanity**—strengths of relationship, such as social intelligence, kindness, and giving and receiving love.

4. **Justice**—capacities, such as fairness, leadership and teamwork, which lead to a healthy life in community.

---

**TALES FROM REAL LIFE > USING WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT STRENGTHS**

She plagiarized her discussion board post again, taking sentences directly from the book without citation. Previously, I would have docked her for plagiarism and felt satisfied I had done my job. Now, however, I reflected on what I knew of her identified strengths, including her stated desire to learn, to lead her in the best direction. Instead of expressing righteous indignation, I invited her to a one-on-one lesson about how to paraphrase more efficiently and effectively. She arrived mildly resentful about being called in and somewhat frustrated as she could not imagine another way to do the assignment. I knew I had to target her strong desire to learn and remained focused on the learning that would improve if she “owned” the content and put it in her words. After demonstrating paraphrasing and having her practice on some sections, she brightened and said, “I would rather understand the material and I see how this method will make me do so.” She had found a reason to not plagiarize that spoke to her strength of Love of Learning. The next day she wrote to thank me for my time.

---

Meet Sally Kuhlenschmidt

Sally Kuhlenschmidt is a professor of psychology at Western Kentucky University. She served as director of the WKU faculty development center for 20 years. Kuhlenschmidt started teaching online in 1998, including courses such as “Issues in Teaching an Online Course,” “Psychological Tests,” and “Abnormal Psychology.” She has trained over 200 faculty in an intensive weeklong program on how to teach online, and served on the Board of the Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education. Most of her professional career has been focused on identifying how faculty can use technology in their instruction in ways that respect their workload and goals.
5. TEMPERANCE—strengths, such as self-regulation, prudence, humility, and forgiveness, which help to maintain balance.

6. TRANSCENDENCE—capacities, such as humor, gratitude, hope, appreciation of beauty and excellence, and spirituality, that lead to meaning and connection with the larger world.

The VIA Institute on Character (http://www.viacharacter.org/) provides a free online survey you can use to determine your strengths profile.

How might character strengths support you in the process of teaching online? As you read the suggested applications, seek your strengths and avoid thinking about qualities you are lacking. It’s the difference between moving toward a destination versus moving away from something unpleasant. The former journey is more likely to bring you to a worthwhile outcome.

**Wisdom and Knowledge**

In the context of online teaching, this cluster of strengths such as perspective and judgment provides tools for evaluating what is worthwhile. These skills let you take advantage of the best technology without wasting time on fads. Curiosity and love of learning permit you to enjoy the process of learning the new tools. And creativity lets you produce innovations in instruction online, tempered by judgment. Regardless of the technology, your wisdom is invaluable to students and can help you recognize the wisdom that students bring to any course. How can you encourage their strengths?

WHEN WE CONNECT ALL THAT WE DO TO A LARGER PURPOSE THEN WE CAN WORK WITH FOCUS AND ENERGY.

**Courage**

For the person who is anxious about technology or for those facing opposition to their technological innovations, the application of courage may seem obvious. These strengths let us be honest about the challenges we are facing so we can better marshal our capacities to work through them. There are specific behavioral skills, such as pausing and breaking the problem down into parts, which keep us going (perseverance) when we encounter problems. Zest for life can support our teaching online if we view the task as an adventure. We don’t always give ourselves credit for the bravery it takes to face the needs of students, to acknowledge the edges of our own knowledge, and to recognize the bravery of our students.

**Humanity**

Without the human connection there is no purpose to any teaching, as the goal of the task is to grow other persons. In the focus on technologies, we may risk losing our humanity and allow the technological environment to lead us. Social intelligence can enable the connection between instructor and students online. If we approach our syllabi, course documents, and emailed messages with an attitude of kindness, then the course can be transformative for students seeking growth. Practicing kindness does not rule out judgment and wisdom in establishing consequences for inappropriate behavior, however. If all of our actions are done with love—love of the discipline, of the growth potential in students, of those who help us in our teaching—then we have succeeded before we take any actions, before any technology is chosen or instruction designed.

**Justice**

Teaching is about building a community of learners, and strengths that encourage community building are fairness, leadership and teamwork. Teachers may have a different sense of what is fair than do students. Get feedback on your policies and procedures to see how they are being interpreted. Showing that you are concerned about developing and supporting course integrity by...
monitoring exams and helping them learn about plagiarism (rather than just catch them at it) are some ways to develop a community of fairness. In this way you evince leadership. Managing the course activities and clearly organizing the online activities is also part of effective leadership. Leaders seek to be the best for their community by continuous improvement of skills. As appropriate, you can also develop teamwork online, helping students learn to work together on projects using a variety of technology tools.

**Temperance**

For creative persons and those just learning to use technologies, it is easy to get seduced by all the options and spend too much time on a minor tool than is justified. The strength of self-regulation can help you monitor your time allocation and prudence can guide you to grow your online course over time, rather than attempting too much at first. Humility keeps you open to the possibility that your strategy isn’t working. Forgiveness is needed for those who may seem impatient with your learning and to forgive students who, in their anxiety, seem abrupt in emails.

**Transcendence**

What is transcendent about teaching online? A sense of humor is not possible without some degree of perspective on the situation. It demands you step back and recognize truth and thereby see new possibilities. Gratitude for the opportunity to use these tools, learn a new skill, and work with the students can help you cope with the frustrations that arise in any complex endeavor. Pausing to “smell the roses” and appreciate how amazing it is to connect with the world through your computer is a powerful moment of appreciation. And, while we know technology and students can be frustrating, we can hope for improvements as well as insights in our students. Our beliefs about our purpose in teaching motivate us and calls upon the strength of spirituality. When we connect all that we do to a larger purpose, then we can work with focus and energy.

**Conclusion**

This is but a quick survey of ways to see our strengths in our online teaching. Given that our work can lead us to focus on weaknesses, the intellectual and emotional courage it takes to shift thinking to strengths should not be underestimated. Practice is required as with learning anything new. But the journey is toward a healthful, constructive, life-affirming, balanced and comfortable outcome. Use your particular strengths to succeed in that journey.

**REFERENCES & RESOURCES**


HSSU faculty take historic step to unionize

With the goal of building “a stellar institution of higher learning for students,” full-time faculty at Harris-Stowe State University, a historically black university in St. Louis, Missouri, voted in early October to unionize. “This is a great day for Harris-Stowe State University,” said Mark Abbott, president of HSSU-NEA, a newly recognized affiliate of Missouri NEA. “A collective bargaining agreement will strengthen the university and enhance the education of our students.” Faculty members at HSSU, where student enrollment dropped this year and graduation rates remain low, have long wanted a stronger voice in campus issues. Their vote was an enthusiastic endorsement of “shared governance,” the common practice in higher education of faculty and staff participating in important decisions on campuses. Through the practice of shared governance, faculty members can increase professional development opportunities, so that they can better serve students. They can also create and implement best-practice tenure and promotion policies, so that the most highly qualified faculty can be recruited and retained. Faculty members also have a number of other student-centered goals: They want to improve student enrollment strategies for recruitment and retention; they want to improve student campus life; they want to own a curriculum that offers students more choices; and they want more direct involvement in student advising. “We look forward to working with the board of regents and the administration to realize the full potential of our great institution,” said Abbott.
Promise vs. Reality

The Authors of a New Report from the Campaign for the Future of Higher Education invite faculty and staff to look behind the curtain at for-profit online education. With so much focus on the “promise” of online education, not enough attention has been paid to the fact that it is big—very, very big—business. But does it pay off for students? The report, entitled “The ‘Promises’ of Online Higher Education: Profits,” is available at FUTUREOFHIGHERED.ORG/WORKINGPAPERS.

None other than Rupert Murdoch has said education represents a potential investment opportunity of $500 billion—and investors are rushing to get a piece of the pie.

Rising into the Future
U.S. Venture-Capital and Growth Investments in Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capital flows, $bn</th>
<th>Number of transactions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: GSV Advisors

Investment in the “EDUCATION INDUSTRY” in 2012.
Source: “Catching on at last…” The Economist, July 2013.

Profits are Soaring
2012 Academic Partnership profits from share of tuition at these universities:

- $4M Arizona State University
- +$10M Florida International University
- $18M Ohio University’s nursing program

Watch them grow!
In 2013, about 200 non-profit institutions of higher education have partnered with for-profit service providers. In the next one to two years, that number is expected to grow to 500.


“Ask hard questions about those pushing the insane rush to online courses. We need to make sure that profits aren’t the priority, but an affordable quality higher education is.”

— Lillian Taiz, president of the California Faculty Association
“MOOC Mania”

By Susan Meisenhelder

The push for increased use of online teaching in colleges and universities has been gaining momentum for some time, but even in that context the recent enthusiasm for MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), free online courses that often enroll tens of thousands of students, is remarkable and rightly dubbed “MOOC Mania.” As with so many so-called “innovations” in higher education, the advocates for MOOCs are as varied as their motivations. However, with the exception of a few individuals at elite universities (several of whom have recently become CEOs in their own MOOC companies), teaching faculty are not driving the conversation about and assessment of MOOCs. In fact, we are often not even in the public conversation.

My purpose in this article is to step back for a moment to examine some of the reasons why it is so difficult for faculty to get a toehold in the debate about MOOCs and to begin thinking about how we can position ourselves to have a stronger voice and greater influence in their development...

Unpacking the claims
Claims about increasing access to higher education are at the heart of arguments for MOOCs, and rightly so; expanded access and greater equity in educational opportunity must be at the heart of any discussion about the future of higher education.

But access is a complex, even slippery, term. It means much more than the mere opportunity to enroll in a course just as access to the middle-class dream of home ownership meant much more than the opportunity to get a loan and move in for a while. For access to be meaningful—and not just an empty advertising slogan—students must have a real chance, if they work hard, to succeed in getting a quality education. How MOOCs measure up to their access claims can only be assessed by asking specific questions about the access they provide: Who is getting access to higher education through MOOCs? And to what?

It is in close consideration of these questions that we find our best starting place for a more meaningful conversation about the value of MOOCs and the claims so often made about them...

What do we do?

In what passes for the public discussion of MOOCs in higher education, faculty have been carefully cast by many tech boosters as backward-looking, slow-moving, self-promoting Luddites cloistered in our Ivory Towers. Getting out of that box will be challenging, but we must take the lead (if not us, then who?) in moving toward a fuller and more honest discussion about MOOCs and the future of higher education.

If we keep our focus on promoting (and making) proposals that truly expand meaningful access to quality higher education and unmasking those that offer only illusion, we can remain true to our own highest professional ideals and connect with the progressive educational values still held by those yearning for higher education opportunity.

We already have a good analysis of what is problematic with MOOCs, and we must continue to develop and refine that analysis. But we will only make a difference if we use that analysis in action.

Fortunately, there are many, many things we can do. (Editor’s note: What are those things, you ask? To read Meisenhelder’s article in full, visit www.nea.org/thoughtandaction.)
California

Ethnic studies programs on California State University campuses are facing dangerous cutbacks, either through underfunding or consolidation. At CSU Stanislaus, two tenure-track faculty plan to leave, and administrators plan not to replace them. At San José State, faculty report administrators intend to either eliminate or merge the African American Studies department. Other cuts are underway or being considered at Bakersfield and Long Beach. In a recent letter to CSU presidents, California Faculty Association president Lillian Taiz and Cecil Canton, chair of the CFA Council for Affirmative Action, asked for a moratorium on further changes until an assessment of the programs can be undertaken and completed. “Given the diversity of our students, we should take a leadership role in providing the kind of education that will help our students be part of the solution to our country’s struggle with issues of equity,” wrote Taiz and Canton.

Florida

Members of the NEA-affiliated grad student union at Florida State University—UFF-FSU-GAU—won increased healthcare coverage from the university last month, after more than 50 students picketed a bargaining session. Previously, the university had covered only 30 to 50 percent of a graduate student’s healthcare costs, and required students to pay the rest in order to stay enrolled. The new contract calls for the university to pick up a larger share. Administrators need to recognize the critical role played by graduate students in making FSU a “preeminent university,” said grad student Lakey Love.

Massachusetts

A bill entitled “An Act to Maintain Faculty and College Excellence in the Commonwealth,” would require all public colleges and universities in Massachusetts to increase the share of courses taught by tenured or tenure-track professors, so that at least 75 percent of 3-credit courses are taught by them. At the same time, it requires adjunct faculty be paid fairly and be provided with health benefits and priority consideration for tenure-track jobs. The bill, which has the support of the Massachusetts Teachers’ Association, would improve the quality of education for students and quality of life for adjunct faculty.

Oregon

Wondering what NEA thinks about “Pay it forward,” a college funding scheme in Oregon? We would prefer “Pay It Now.” See here: www.nea.org/assets/docs/HE/Pay_it_Foward_Coalition_Statement.pdf

Washington

Instead of across-the-board salary increases, a creative new faculty contract at Eastern Washington University focuses on bringing up every faculty member to the national salary average in their field. It means some people, especially mid-career professionals, will see raises as large as $18,000. Others, who earn more than market rates, will see none. “It’s a fairly unique way to approach compensation,” said Bill Lyne, president of the statewide faculty union, to the Associated Press.

TWO-MINUTE INTERVIEW > LILLY LEDBETTER

Four years after President Obama signed into law the act that bears her name, LILLY LEDBETTER continues the fights for fair pay for women, who still earn just 77 cents for every $1 earned by a man. At the recent NEA Joint Conference on Concerns of Minorities and Women, she said, “There is so much to do, and so little time.”

Sometimes the issue of unequal pay seems like a women’s-only issue, but you say it’s not. Can you explain that?

I’m old enough to remember when the classified ads said women’s jobs and men’s jobs. But right now, in America, it takes two incomes to make it. Right now, today, in America, the family is dependent on the woman’s income. (Editor: In fact, in 40 percent of American households, women are the sole or primary earners.)

When people call me to talk to me about their own case of pay discrimination, it’s often the husband on the phone saying, ‘What can we do?’ It’s not just a woman’s issue — it’s a family issue. I love to talk to men who are fired up, because it’s their wife, their mother, their sister, their daughter, and the woman across the street.

There used to be a saying that until mothers teach their sons to accept women, there never would be equality. But I look at educators and I think you have just as much or more influence. From your position, you can inspire women and girls to go into non-traditional jobs, and you can inspire young men to be accepting of those girls. And we can turn this world around.

What else have you learned from your experience?

The main thing I’ve learned is it’s not so much what they do, it’s how you react to it. Keep an eye on them. Keep an eye on Washington. Keep an eye on what’s happening in your state. Don’t assume your neighbor is doing it.

Sticking together helps. When you stick together, you’ve got a bigger voice and a louder voice. We have to do this because it’s so critical for American families. When those news reporters ask me when I’m going to let it go, well… I tell them I can’t let it go, I can’t let it go.

We hear your book, Grace and Grit: My Fight for Equal Pay at Goodyear and Beyond, is getting made into a movie. Who should play you?

Oh, I don’t care! Although I bet Meryl Streep would be good!
The NEA® Cash Rewards Visa Signature® credit card

7 Reasons Why
this should be the only credit card you reach for

1% cash back everywhere, every time

2% cash back at grocery stores

3% cash back on gas

Grocery and gas bonus rewards apply to the first $1,500 in combined purchases in these categories each quarter.*

4. Low Intro APR offer† – so you can start saving right away

5. Special $100 cash rewards bonus – after qualifying purchases**

6. Cash rewards are automatic so you don’t need to enroll or sign up to earn your rewards — and they don’t expire — so you can’t lose out

7. A prestigious black card design that reflects the pride of your profession — because not everyone can be an educator

Plus enjoy these great features:

Apply Today! Call 1.888.758.7946 mention priority code VABZKY

† For more information about the rates, fees, other costs and benefits associated with the use of the credit card, call the toll-free number above or visit neamb.com.

* The 2% cash back on grocery purchases and 3% cash back on gas purchases applies to the first $1,500 in combined purchases in these categories each quarter. After that, the base 1% earn rate applies to those purchases.

** You will qualify for $100 bonus cash rewards if you use your new credit card account to make any combination of Purchase transactions totaling at least $500 (exclusive of any transaction fees, returns and adjustments) that post to your account within 90 days of the account open date. Limit one (1) bonus cash rewards offer per new account. This one-time promotion is limited to new customers opening an account in response to this offer. Other advertised promotional bonus cash rewards offers can vary from this promotion and may not be substituted.

Allow 8-12 weeks from qualifying for the bonus cash rewards to post to your rewards balance. The value of this reward may constitute taxable income to you. You may be issued an Internal Revenue Service Form 1099 (or other appropriate form) that reflects the value of such reward. Please consult your tax advisor, as neither Bank of America, its affiliates, nor their employees provide tax advice.

This credit card program is issued and administered by FIA Card Services, N.A. NEA® and NEA Cash Rewards are service marks of NEA’s Member Benefits Corporation. Visa and Visa Signature are registered trademarks of Visa International Service Association, and are used by the issuer pursuant to license from Visa U.S.A. Inc. Bank of America is a registered trademark of Bank of America Corporation.

©2013 Bank of America Corporation
Academic Freedom

A win for faculty’s First Amendment rights

BY JASON WALTA

MOST OF MY WRITING for the Advocate tend to be of the doom-and-gloom variety. For example, in September 2011, I discussed how recent developments (or, to put it more accurately, deteriorations) in the Supreme Court’s First Amendment jurisprudence pose a grave danger to academic freedom. In particular, I noted that lower courts were beginning to apply the 2006 decision in Garcetti v. Ceballos—where the Supreme Court overruled longstanding precedent to hold that the First Amendment gives no protection to public-employee speech made “pursuant to” the employee’s official duties—to speech by academics and educators.

So, in a welcome respite from my role as doomsayer, I’m happy to report on a recent and significant decision from an influential federal appeals court that vindicates the First Amendment rights of educators and that offers a rare, eloquent, and full-throated defense of academic freedom as a core constitutional imperative.

In Demers v. Austin, a public university professor in Washington State named David Demers alleged that university administrators retaliated against him for distributing a short pamphlet describing his proposal to improve the academic standing and quality of the school of communications, at which he held a tenured faculty position. A lower court, relying on Garcetti, ruled that Demers distributed the pamphlet “pursuant to” his role as a faculty member and therefore received no First Amendment protection.

But, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit reversed the lower court and reinstated Demers’ First Amendment claims. The court began by noting that the Garcetti decision was not controlling because the Garcetti Court itself declined to say whether its newly articulated limits on public employee speech would extend to “a case involving speech related to scholarship or teaching.”

The Ninth Circuit then surveyed the crucial role that academic freedom plays in securing the First Amendment rights of all citizens. In particular, the court noted that “scholarship cannot flourish in an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust,” and that unless “teachers and students . . . remain free to inquire, to study and to evaluate, to gain new maturity and understanding,” “our civilization will stagnate and die.” For this reason, the court saw “safeguarding academic freedom” as being “of transcendent value to all of us and not merely to the teachers concerned.” Given the “special niche in our constitutional tradition” that academic freedom occupies, the Ninth Circuit concluded that the Supreme Court’s restrictive ruling in Garcetti “does not—indeed, consistent with the First Amendment, cannot—apply to teaching and academic writing . . . of a teacher and professor.” Demers’ claims were therefore allowed to go forward.

Apart from the Ninth Circuit’s rousing defense of academic freedom, two other aspects of its decision are especially noteworthy. The first is that the ruling clearly is not confined to higher education. That is, the court repeatedly framed the protections of academic freedom as extending, not just to professors in universities or colleges, but to all teachers employed by government institutions.

A second important feature of the Ninth Circuit’s ruling is that it is not limited to speech in the form of academic scholarship. Rather, the court declared the First Amendment may extend to educators’ speech on “such things as budget, curriculum, departmental structure, and faculty hiring.” As a result, the ruling protects the voices of educators in debates about their workplaces and their institutions’ role in the broader public conversation about education policy and reform.

I’ll likely return in my next column with a hefty dose of cynicism—after all, the Supreme Court just started a new term in which affirmative action, labor rights, and reasonable limits on political spending are already on the chopping block. But for now, I’m content to bask in the glow of this well-deserved victory for the rights of educators.
I MUST TAKE ISSUE with two of A. Lighthall’s points (“Ten things you should know about student vets,” May 2013), which seem to endorse, uncritically, a prevailing view of war and what its veterans need.

From The Iliad to The Yellow Birds, those who have waged or witnessed wars have repeatedly depicted them as monstrous. “War is an atrocity-producing situation,” wrote Harvard psychiatrist Robert J. Lifton, implying that the vengeance and fear of the battlefield will compel soldiers to commit horrific acts, and which now threaten to haunt them.

Why, then, does Lighthall warn readers never to acknowledge this fact in the presence of a veteran? Does she believe that soldiers don’t, at some level, recognize its truth? Indeed, studies of PTSD have implicated not only wartime memories and associated feelings, but also the attempt to suppress memories and deny feelings. Should we partner in that?

We’ll be of more service if we help vets understand they are not responsible for much of what happened—the situation was. We can refer them to various opportunities for healing, from individual counseling and 12-step models that include seeking forgiveness, to reconciling with their victims—as the many vets returning to Vietnam have done—and even to engaging in activism to prevent future wars.

Likewise, from veterans in my classes, and my study of cognitive dissonance among soldiers who’ve killed—research initiated by students from military families—I’ve learned a good number of vets do see themselves as victims, despite Lighthall’s insistence to the contrary. They feel victimized, variously, by a dishonest recruiter, an Administration’s policies, an under-equipped army, an unresponsive VA.

A case in point is the leader of my school’s veterans group—a traumatized and unemployed former Marine—who recently shocked the campus by taking his own life, and whose last remarks made it clear he felt victimized by the government. Lighthall’s adamant denial of such a possibility, even as soldiers’ suicide rates soar, seems intended more to deflect anti-war sentiment than to reflect vets’ needs.

In the moving documentary The Ground Truth, an Iraq Veterans Against the War member observes: “That wasn’t our fight over there. This is our fight.” I wonder if we shouldn’t be encouraging our vets to join him—to obtain the services they require, gain the peace they seek, and learn the political skills they’ll need to make the next war less likely?