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## Part Deux, Facebook Friends Speak: How College Teachers Made an Impact on Their Lives

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Teaching and Learning Center

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# The Weekly Reader

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## UpComing Sessions

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9/10

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9/16, 9/18

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## Part Deux, Facebook Friends Speak: How College Teachers Made an Impact on Their Lives

Last week, I posed this question to my Facebook friends: "What is something a college teacher (or college staff member) did or said that had a big effect on you?" I promised to keep identities vague, unless the person said it was okay to mention his or her name. The responses started rolling in soon after I asked. I used about half of them last week, so here is part deux.

I found it interesting that almost all of the responses were positive, even though I did not specify that. Someone asked if they had to be positive, but only one person sent in one that was a negative experience—and he asked afterwards if that was okay. I find that positivity reassuring: I think we are often hard-wired for the negative, so the fact that positive experiences were the first to come to mind for almost everyone is a good thing.

A colleague in the College of Arts and Sciences: "My professor used to allow

me to come sit in his office and fret for hours about what I would be when I grew up. I had dismissed graduate school as too expensive for me, but then he explained to me how tuition waivers and graduate assistantships allow some students to go to grad school for free. I replied, 'Yeah, but those are only for the cream of the crop.' He said, 'You are the cream of the crop.' Wow. At such a great school with so many other bright students around me, I'd never thought of myself that way. I didn't go to grad school right away, but I remembered his words years later, applied, and went tuition free. A little encouragement and some advice about the world beyond undergrad made all the difference! Thank you Dr. Bost. I pay that conversation forward with my own students all the time.

A former Winthrop student who is now a highly-valued staff person: "My very first class in college (Fall 1995) was International Politics

(honors section) with Dr. Chris Van Aller. I was excited to see how the class would be seeing as how I had just returned from a year in the former Eastern German city of Leipzig. After going over the syllabus and answering a few questions, he looks at the class of approximately 30 students and asks, 'So, what is going on in the world? What is something happening right now outside the United States that you might have a question about?' While you could hear the crickets chirping in the back of the room, I was trying to decide which of the dozen or so questions running through my mind I would ask. After a full minute of no one saying anything, I popped my hand up and asked, 'Why is China hosting the World Conference on Women (Hillary and Chelsea Clinton were in attendance)? Isn't that a contradiction of terms?' CVA looks at me and says, 'Excellent question!' and then proceeds to discuss the why and wherefore of this historical

*A former student remembers the impact of one of our colleagues, a teacher who influenced many lives before hers was tragically ended: "Dr. Cynthia Furr shared information about her personal life. Not in an unprofessional way, but in a way that let us all know that she was human, approachable, and real! She had a passion for Shakespeare, but also a passion for the students, and it showed. She also noticed me and my efforts. I didn't feel like just a number. I felt confident that she would be able to help me."*



## Continued from page 1

event. Being told that I asked an excellent question made my semester start off right and gave me just enough confidence to speak up other times in class later on."

That student was in one of my classes: "My first writing class in college was Writing 101 Honors with you. I did not do well on writing assignments in high school, and after a year abroad learning German, things were not going to be easy in college. I was extremely nervous about the first writing assignment: a descriptive paper about an event in your life. I racked my brain for days trying to figure out what to write. I had an experience over the weekend in between and when I related that story to a friend, they suggested that I write about it based on how I told it. I did my absolute best to follow the guidelines but was still sweating how it would be evaluated by a professor I did not know well and based on my past writing grades. When you handed back the papers, you kept mine and read parts of it aloud to the class to illustrate an 'A' paper and one that met the definition of a descriptive paper.

· Again, that boost of confidence in my writing ability made me no longer

scared to give writing a shot, and while not all of my papers were A's from then on, I only needed it on the first one to get me started. Thank you. You may not have thought much of that situation, but I assure you it made all the difference in how I approached any writing assignment from then on and even through graduate school." Actually, I do remember that, quite well.

A former student remembers the impact of one of our colleagues, a teacher who influenced many lives before hers was tragically ended: "Dr. Cynthia Furr shared information about her personal life. Not in an unprofessional way, but in a way that let us all know that she was human, approachable, and real! She had a passion for Shakespeare, but also a passion for the students, and it showed. She also noticed me and my efforts. I didn't feel like just a number. Her being personable and knowledgeable made me feel like I could come to her with my questions and concerns; I felt confident that she would be able to help me." Another former student, one I taught as a freshman and later when he was a graduate student: "I began at Winthrop as an English

Secondary Education major and day one of my EDUC 110 class, my prof said, 'If you want to be a teacher so you can make a difference and change lives, you're in the wrong profession.' A few days later, I dropped the class and changed from Secondary Ed to just a plain English major. All my life I had only ever imagined myself teaching, but for the rest of my college career, I was left lost and wondering what I would now do with my life. Now, I have no certification, but I teach at an independent school in NC, and I try every day to make a difference and change my students' lives (even if I am in the wrong profession).

One of my friends: "Freshman year, history professor in his 60s told us how he had never earned more than a modest sum, his only possessions of any value were a color television and a nice grey suit, and that he had spent the previous 40 years working as a tour guide throughout the world rather than putting his PhD to its intended purpose. His point was to teach his firm belief that 'your possessions possess you.' Years passed. Every time I made a significant purchase, I thought of his words. I finally get it."

## Thanks For Helping Make the Teaching and Learning Center Work!

Winthrop's Teaching and Learning Center offers a wide variety of sessions each year for faculty and staff, on teaching, technology, professional development, and personal development. From leading class discussion to mastering the Smart podium to tenure and promotion to cooking soufflés, the TLC tries to make sure that all faculty and staff receive

the kinds of professional and personal development that will make them better teachers, administrators, and employees.

To offer this programming, the TLC depends on the talent, expertise, and generosity of our faculty and staff. We do not have a big budget to bring in outside speakers and experts. Even so, we are able to offer engaging,

timely, and valuable sessions every year on a variety of topics. We thank those who have offered their time and talent in past years.

We also thank those of you who have attended TLC sessions. Your time is valuable, and we appreciate you taking some of it to enrich yourself through professional and personal development.

## A Service From the TLC: Teaching Consultation

The TLC for several years has been offering a service: teaching consultation. At the instructor's request, I (or another agreed-upon person) will visit your class to observe and consult with you afterwards about your successes and challenges. This consultation has nothing to do with the tenure and

promotion process, and no reports will be made to department chairs or deans (unless you so request). The invitation to the consultant can only come from the instructor, not from a dean or chair or any other person. All conversations will be private and confidential. If you don't want me to visit your class and observe your teaching, we could

just meet and talk about your teaching. If I am not available to visit your class because of my schedule, I will find a qualified person to do the consulting. So please let me know if you would like to invite me into your class or for a consultation. Call or email me (803) 323-3679 or [birdj@winthrop.edu](mailto:birdj@winthrop.edu).

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and Open Educational Resources. Within each category, you will find a number of excellent and informative videos. The Office of Academic Affairs has provided us a one-year subscription to this service.

People often tell the TLC that they would like to go to sessions, but they don't have the time or they can't

at the times sessions are offered. With Go2Knowledge, you can attend sessions on demand, anywhere, 24/7. The TLC will also have frequent Go2Knowledge Groups, where we meet to discuss a presentation. Log in here: <http://www.go2knowledge.org/winthrop> See you there!

## Thought For the Week

"Get your facts first, and then you can distort them as much as you please."  
--Mark Twain