Communicating Institutional Mission and Values through Photographs

New Ways to Engage Internal Audiences and Broader Community
Introductions

- Cassandra Horii
  - Scientist
  - Educational Developer, Caltech

- Martin Springborg
  - Photographer
  - Educational Developer, Minnesota State
Overview

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Evolving Education
Training the scientists and engineers of the future starts with teaching for the future, by Andrew Allan

As any evolutionary biologist will tell you, if you don’t evolve, you perish. Throughout time, this has proved true not just for entire species, but for societies, organizations, companies, nations, and—especially—institutions of higher education, whose charge is essential to reaching the world’s many of students and to remaining competitive in an ever-expanding field of educational options. Stanislaw Grof, the director of the Caltech Center for Undergraduate Education, describes his efforts to modernize the undergraduate core curriculum, to revitalize the campus’s writing center, and to focus a dedicated center for teaching and learning, and to increase the online areas to expand the institution’s educational reach, Caltech is undergoing an educational revolution—an educational reinvigoration, if you will—that is changing the very students connect with faculty, faculty connect with students, and both interact with the information and ideas they’re communicating together.

“Once the syllabus is set, there’s not a lot we can do to change it,” says Bruce Sapp, the director of the Writing Center. “This is why we think about undergraduate education, and a commitment among the faculty to improve it,” with Jonathan Katz, chair of the Division of the Humanities and Social Sciences, who has been closely involved in Caltech’s recent initiatives to increase a series of changes to update its core curriculum. This sequence of general education requirements has not been revised for nearly two decades. These changes have important implications not only for how our students will learn, he notes, but for how we as faculty will teach them.”

In the midst of all this reinvigoration and revitalization, Minnesota photographer and educator Martin Springberg came to Caltech as part of his work on a nationwide photographic essay he’s compiling, he spent three days taking shots of faculty and students as they went about the business of teaching and learning. The photographs on the next five pages are from that look at a day in Caltech’s educational life.
Marquette University Service Learning

CENTER FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING
SERVICE LEARNING PROGRAM

ANNUAL REPORT
FALL 2013 – SPRING 2014
Reflection: In your context...

What messages are most important to communicate to internal audiences/stakeholders?

How about external audiences/stakeholders?

How does the use of photographs align with the intended messages and impact?
Institutional Change
Penn State Tribute to Excellence
Penn State Tribute to Excellence
Teaching and Writing at Caltech: Past, Present, and Future

From the modest classrooms of the early days of Harvey Mudd College to the diverse venues of Caltech today, the activities of teaching, learning, and writing have taken on complex, ever-evolving forms. In this paper, we explore how communication and the act of writing have been central.

Grasping and understanding the power and meaning of words and ideas, and appreciating the intellectual and expressive potential of the written and spoken language, is a hallmark of the Caltech experience.

Within each grouping, we emphasize the importance of language in shaping our experiences and how language and meaning behavior are built upon and reinforced through the language of the mind. We explain how our understanding of the world and how we interact with others are shaped by language and its use. We explore the role of language in shaping our understanding and our ability to communicate effectively.

Over the past few years, the Center for Teaching and Learning has worked closely with faculty and students to develop ways to incorporate language and argument into their approaches to communicating about the world and the practices of Caltech. The use of language has become a way for the institution to engage with the world and to create new opportunities for students and faculty to engage with each other.

The exhibit was co-curated by Sarah Cunningham, professor of English at Coker College, and Miriam Stolarz-Fradkin, director of the Writing, Learning, and Teaching Center. The exhibit was supported by the McHenry Foundation.
Caltech Exhibit
I returned to my own campus with a new curiosity about the stories that our images of teaching here tell, and I hope to start some conversations with my colleagues about those stories in the coming months. But I found the exhibit inspiring in a more personal way as well. After a semester away from the classroom, I’m ready to jump back in this fall — and hope I can create the kind of energized, inclusive, and curious classrooms that Springborg and Horii helped bring to life in their exhibition at Caltech.”
Reflection: In your context...

What are the top change initiatives or goals?

How could photographs support or enhance efforts to reach those change initiatives or goals?
Photography in Teaching Consultations
Sample prompts:

- What do you see?
- What stands out to you?
- What does the set of images convey all together?
- What seems to be missing from the images?
- What insights might you have about teaching and learning based on these images?
Sample Prompts:

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- What seems to be missing from the images?
- What insights might you have about teaching and learning based on these images?
Research – 24 Consultations

- Baccalaureate Institution: 12
- Research University: 8
- Masters Institution: 2
- Associates Institution: 2

Bar chart:
- STEM: 9
- Humanities: 8
- Technical/Professional: 5
- Other: 3
Research

Outcomes of Photo-based Consultation:

- The photographs are **affirming** to faculty members—showing them they have reached a certain level in their instruction, providing them with positive images of themselves as teachers.
- Still images give **information** that other consultation processes (written observation, video, etc.) do not. Most of this additional information has to do with students, giving faculty insight into their engagement and other actions.
Research

What did we find?

“I like the images of students taking notes. They show the students are engaged with the material. Especially students in the back of the classroom. I did not see that before. I’m mentally noting that maybe it’s good that people move around in my classes. If you are disengaged, sitting in the same place could promote disengagement. Students being in their comfort zones, and that could be a good thing or a bad thing.”

46% of instructors reported a specific intended change in their teaching practice.
Research

What did we find?

- **Teaching Practice**: 29 Incidents of Reflection, 18 Unique Individuals
- **Students**: 22 Incidents of Reflection, 12 Unique Individuals
- **Teaching Materials or Space**: 12 Incidents of Reflection, 8 Unique Individuals
- **Teacher Self Concept**: 11 Incidents of Reflection, 9 Unique Individuals
Research

What did we find?

“You develop these personal relationships with these students. In any of these personal relationships, I take them seriously. I want people to like me, I want to give back to them. When I look at these pictures, it feels like it’s almost too intimate. I feel like they are giving me something really good. It’s really coming back to me in these pictures.”
Research

What did we find?

“[I] see the movement. I’m limited in how far I can move because of the setup. I spend a lot of time at the podium because that’s where the computer is. I go over to the screen sometimes to highlight, but also use the pointer. The little slice of chalkboard between screen and podium is where I do most of my writing. Sometimes I travel to the other chalkboard area, but rarely.”
Research

What did we find?

“I try to be relaxed. I think I’m relaxed, but somewhat formal. I do look very formal and stiff in these pictures. Maybe that’s just me. I’ve never seen any images of myself teaching. The vision doesn’t match the feeling I had of myself at the time.”
Research

What did we find?

Consultation Process

- 34 Incidents of Reflection, 21 Unique Individuals (asked for specifically in discussion prompts)

Teaching Practice

- 29 Incidents of Reflection, 18 Unique Individuals

Students

- 22 Incidents of Reflection, 12 Unique Individuals

Teaching Materials or Space

- 12 Incidents of Reflection, 8 Unique Individuals

Teacher Self Concept

- 11 Incidents of Reflection, 9 Unique Individuals
What did we find?

“[This process] captures moments in time that in the heat of the battle you don’t usually pick up on. I’ve been very interested in looking at these – it reinforces some things I’m trying to do; points out other things I’m not noticing. Not quite raising red flags, but raising my awareness about what might be going on. Am I getting excited about the topic because I love it and thinking students are with me, but maybe they are leaning back or not as engaged?”
Reflection: In your context...

What kinds of faculty development initiatives or goals are important?

What media or materials are currently used in faculty development programs?

How could photographs support or enhance those faculty development initiatives or goals?
Photographs in Higher Education play a role in representation, discourse, and change:

- Socially (via collective images)
- Institutionally (via local images)
- Instructionally (via consultation and reflection)
Reflection & Synthesis

- What are possible next steps?
  - Partnerships, collaborators, allies on our campuses
  - Other

- What will be our challenges?
  - Funding
  - Breaking from precedent (marketing, institutional brand etc.)
  - Other
Thank you!

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Communicating Institutional Mission and Values through Photographs: New Ways to Engage Internal Audiences and Broader Community

AAC&U Annual Meeting: January 25, 2019

Session Information

Abstract
Institutions often use photographs in their digital and print communications, but this powerful medium has been underutilized for telling important stories about teaching, learning, and institutional change. This session explores compelling advantages to a documentary approach to higher education photography, to spark discussion, promote faculty development, and reclaim and advance a captivating, authentic narrative. Participants will engage with examples and research findings from a national photo documentary effort, The Teaching and Learning Project, involving 12 institutions (public, private, large, small, open-access, selective, two-year, four-year, and doctoral), featured in the Chronicle of Higher Education and elsewhere. With a new framework for examining their institutional goals and prior photographic strategy, they will develop applications and action plans for strategically enhancing, expanding, or refining approaches. Throughout the session, participants will engage with sample photographs from a variety of campuses; images will be captioned and available online for full accessibility.

Presenters
Martin Springborg: martin.springborg@gmail.com
Cassandra Volpe Horii: cvh@caltech.edu

Materials
Session slides: https://goo.gl/h6mbvi
Handout (this document): https://goo.gl/V99DSh

Accessibility
● Images and photographs included in the session slides at the link above have descriptive alt-text available.
● Barring technical difficulties, Google Slides live captions option will be enabled during the session.
Reflection Prompts

Reflection 1: Communicating Messages

In your context...

What messages are most important to communicate to internal audiences and stakeholders?

How about external audiences and stakeholders?

How does the use of photographs align with the intended messages and impact?

Reflection 2: Institutional Change

In your context...

What are the top change initiatives or goals?

How could photographs support or enhance efforts to reach those change initiatives or goals?
Reflection 3: Faculty Development

In your context...

What kinds of faculty development initiatives or goals are important?

What media or materials are currently used in faculty development programs?

How could photographs support or enhance those faculty development initiatives or goals?

Synthesis and Next Steps

Looking at the goals that you explored above—related to communicating messages, institutional change, and/or faculty development—which one is your top priority?

What are possible next steps for you on this priority?
  ● E.g.: Connecting with partners, collaborators, and allies at your institution; seeking information; assessing needs...

What might be some challenges?
  ● E.g.: Funding; breaking from precedent (marketing, institutional brand etc.); making a case for action...

How might you address those challenges?
Resources and Links

Websites:
- Teaching and Learning Project:
  https://springborgphoto.com/teaching-and-learning-project
- Caltech exhibit:
  http://teachlearn.caltech.edu/TeachWeek/exhibit2018

Photo albums:
- Hidden Work: https://photos.app.goo.gl/Cu6T5J7JLKuMiZ9b8
- Beyond Class, Beyond Campus:
  https://photos.app.goo.gl/zJTSpws27PaBz7S8A

Articles and Publications:

  https://teachlearn.caltech.edu/documents/84-e_s_fall_2013.pdf


• Yoder, S. Sept. 6 Event Showcases Images of Faculty Teaching in Courses of All Types *Penn State News*, August 29, 2018.  
https://news.psu.edu/story/533410/2018/08/27/administration/sept-6-event-showcases-images-faculty-teaching-courses-all