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Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations
Union des Associations des Professeurs des Universités de l'Ontario

2017-2018 OCUFA TEACHING AND ACADEMIC LIBRARIANSHIP AWARDS

CITATION FOR DR. ROBERT FLEISIG



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Head, heart, hands. You may have heard these words used to describe Bloom's Three Domains of Learning: The Cognitive Domain, which involves the knowledge and intellectual skills students develop, the Affective Domain, which focuses on students' growth in feelings and values, and the Psychomotor Domain, which refers to the acquisition of manual or physical skills. Those of us try to incorporate the three Domains into our teaching know that it is not always an easy task, and it is often the Affective Domain—the “heart” piece--that we struggle with, especially in programs and courses that lean heavily toward the theoretical and practical—like engineering, for example.

In Dr. Robert Fleisig's classes at McMaster University, the Affective Domain--the “heart”—plays a key role. Dr. Fleisig leads the Engineering Profession and Practice mandatory first-year course, one that the director calls the ‘crown jewel’ of the program. This is a very unique engineering course in that the major focus is on the development of empathy and creativity in students through community engagement. Dr. Fleisig firmly believes that empathy can be learned, and that practicing empathy plays a vital role in unlocking students' creative potential. A similar approach guides Dr. Fleisig's graduate-level course titled Design Thinking.

The community connection embedded into Dr. Fleisig's courses means that his students work with individuals, usually those living with a disability. In collaborating with nursing



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homes, hospitals, and other organizations, Dr. Fleisig's students develop solutions to real-world problems by framing the issue, sketching ideas, and then building and testing their prototypes. Examples of the students' work include an unobtrusive barrier to prevent long-term care residents from wandering into other residents' rooms, and a device called a "Coiner" that enables people with limited hand function to insert a quarter into a coin-operated supermarket cart.

In 2013, put their efforts into helping a local resident living with rheumatoid arthritis who had serious difficulty fueling her car. Challenged with designing a device to help the client use her car independently they spent a significant amount of time talking with her, and viewing videos of her operating a gas pump. Ultimately, the students presented the client with a device that fitted on the pump trigger to ease muscle strain, a tool that she still uses today.

"I have Dr. Fleisig to thank for inspiring me to not only be a better designer", writes a student, "but a more compassionate person of other peoples' needs." The IMPACT Project is the title of Dr. Fleisig's course. I cannot think of a more apt description.

On behalf of the OCUFA Awards Committee, please join me in congratulating Dr. Robert Fleisig, recipient of the 2017/2018 OCUFA Teaching Award.