

Teaching pulls life's work together for Cross

✓ Computer science instructor finds teaching aspect in all of his career choices

by Tina Guinn
Editor-in-Chief

When Doug Cross graduated from the University of Oregon with a bachelor's degree in psychology in 1976, the country's mindset was one of compassion, a feeling of "people helping people," he said.

Cross worked as a drug and alcohol counselor, dealing with "the population most people didn't want to work with." But after he had been in the system for awhile, things began to change.

Cross said the profession grew to be against his ethics. And in a roundabout way, that is how he happened into our family here at CCC as a computer science instructor.

Cross has been a teacher "in an official position" for six years. "But every job I've had has had a teaching component to it," he said. After he worked in treatment centers, Cross tried counseling in agencies, but that didn't work either.

"I didn't do well in agencies. They only wanted money," he said. So, he went from an agency setting into private practice. But he said he didn't know what to charge his clients. So he let them set up their own pay schedule.

Cross said you can't make much money that way. So, it was time once again for Cross to move on.

"I worked excessively...many of the patients would die [in the treatment centers]. I didn't take that personally, but there is an element saying 'could I have done something differently?'"

"It was a good time to change careers. I had done all I wanted to do. To keep on would have been redundant," he said.

And change careers he did. Cross moved from the psychology scene to the teaching field. He became an instructor at Trend College in Salem, where he taught for nearly five years.

But Trend went through some tough times, too, and Cross was laid off. It was during this time that he happened upon the position at Clackamas which had been vacated by a computer science instructor who had gone on sabbatical.

Cross interviewed for the position in spring of '94 and was accepted. His first term, he taught only three CS 120 classes.

"They liked me and kept me on. Now I'm teaching almost a full load or more," he said. "I saw the opening at CCC and jumped at it. I like it here, and for some reason they seem to like me," he said.

Currently, Cross teaches five classes at Clackamas, two CS 120 classes and three CS 121 classes. He also teaches a Psychology 201 class at Portland Community College. "It keeps me busy," he said.

"Everything I've done has been geared toward teaching. Counseling is just teaching; it is stand-up teaching. Besides, I'm

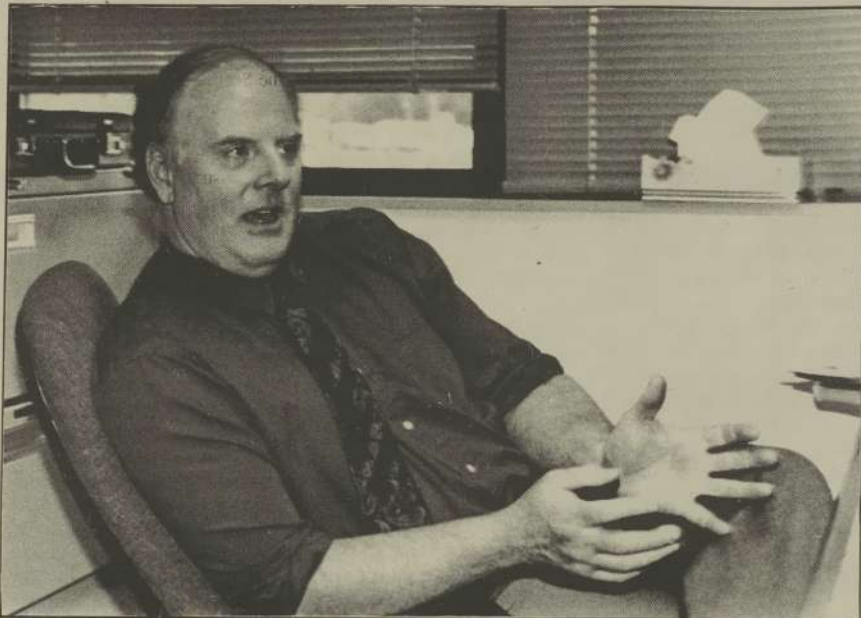


Photo by Christi Snavely

Doug Cross, computer science instructor, lends an unconventional look at teaching.

a ham. I enjoy the interaction.

"Teaching is the natural way to pull it all together," he said.

In some of the spare time he has, Cross works as an actor in Salem. But he said his current acting interest "came out of the blue."

Cross was involved in drama as a child, but when he got into high school, he was given the choice of participating in athletics or theater. He chose sports -- football, wrestling. But he said that by the time he got into college, his athletic career was finished due to injuries. So he focused his energies on his studies and became very career-oriented.

At one point, Cross was a triathlete. He trained for one year, then in the next two years, he competed in seven triathalons, because it was "something I always wanted to do."

Cross kept in touch with theater life by attending productions, but he was too focused on his career to audition. After his job ended at Trend College, and Cross's workload lightened, he went for an audition, and got his first part.

He played a small role in what he called "a bad melodrama," but he said it was enough to make him curious.

"I only had a 10-minute part, but it was enough to say, 'I can do that.'"

"It got me hungry," he said.

Cross has performed in two plays since then: "The Nerd" and "Noises Off." This term, Cross has already auditioned for, and received, a lead role in "Inherit the Wind."

Cross also enjoys designing and building stained glass windows. For the past 15 years, Cross has been developing his technique and reproducing art pieces. Some of his windows have received awards at state fairs. Some of the windows that Cross creates are so detailed that they contain over

1,000 pieces of glass.

The 100-year-old house that Cross resides in in Salem is another source of recreation for him. When he first purchased the home, Cross had in mind to remodel. However, now he is in the process of reworking the inside. One project he worked on was to convert two large windows in his home into a stained glass scene.

Cross also finds time to play his electronic keyboard, which he occasionally hooks up to his computer and uses as a MIDI.

Cross prides himself on having different aspects to his life. "That way I don't get stuck or become stagnant," he said.

Almost as an afterthought, Cross said that the computer is his hobby too. "That's why my style is upbeat and exciting," he said.

While Cross enjoys working on his computer, he said, "I am not obsessed with it. Some people have to be by their computers 24 hours a day. But I don't," he said.

The different facets of Cross's personality help him to make necessary, often almost immediate, transitions.

"I go from here (CCC) teaching computers to PCC teaching psychology. It's a very different mindset. I can actually feel myself moving from computer to psychology mode. I love to keep up

with me.

"I don't like to be boxed in, or pigeon-holed. When I find that I'm doing that, I like to stir up the mix.

"I don't do nothing well. When I have nothing to do, I find something to do," Cross said.

Cross admitted that sometimes he gets himself in trouble because there is not enough time to get everything done. But then he exercises discipline. "Just like a student, I have to be able to put stuff on hold," he said.

Amid all of the other activities that Cross is involved in and makes time for, teaching is perhaps one of the most important.

"Teaching is a challenge. It is a challenge to keep students awake," he said. More seriously, however, Cross sees his role in the classroom as a vital one.

"My purpose is to make you [the students] think. If that means challenging you, giving you an assignment that is not clear...this is big people school and I respect you as big people.

"My job is to prepare you for 'the real world', not the academic world," Cross said.

That is the reason Cross gives "very nebulous assignments. If it frustrates you, all the better. Then you will learn."

"No one taught me comput-

ers. I learned myself. I would get so frustrated, but I would learn. If someone came along and told me 'ABC' I would walk away (from the lesson) and forget." For this reason, Cross does his best to challenge students, even if that means making them not like him.

"Sometimes it's (his purpose) to make students not like me. When I was in school, there were two groups of instructors I learned most from: the kind I liked and would do anything for, and the kind I hated and had to do well to prove I could, I guess. Those teachers who were in the middle, I don't even remember," he said.

Cross believes that if a student walks away from his class not liking him, he has accomplished something.

"If a student doesn't like me and he continues to work, in spite of me, then I've moved them.

"We live in a microwave society, where three minutes later, if you don't like it, you toss it away, whether it is people, relationships, a job, an education. If you don't like it, you have to tough it out sometimes," he said.


Cross wants students to get their money's worth while in school. When he was in school, Cross demanded his money's worth. And as a result, he developed close friendships with some of his professors because he "stood out a little."

"I think when students can question themselves, authority, me, when they have the courage to do that, then they're making progress. When students sit and fake their way through, it bothers me. I want people to get their money's worth," he said.

All in all, Cross feels that the students are the most important factor; they are the reason he is here. Knowing that students have applied the knowledge Cross has shared with them makes a large impact on him.

"Having students come back and validate what and how they learned...I'm not conventional, but I'm working for you (the students), not my bosses. That's what keeps me coming back, seeing a new group of students every three months," he said.

"Keep the desire to learn. Learning is an ongoing process that never stops. Always be curious and keep your mind active. And have fun," he said.



GET PAID TO WORK OUT !!
EXCELLENT PART-TIME OPPORTUNITY

Roadway Package System is looking for individuals to help load packages into trucks.


APPLY IN PERSON AT:

6447 N. Cutter Circle
Mocks Landing Industrial Park
off Basin Ave.-Swan Island.
or call 650-7227

JOB DETAILS

- * Work PT 3-5 hr. shifts
- * Pays \$8.00-\$8.50/hr.
- * .50 cent raise after 90 adys
- * (includes \$1.00/hr towards tuition)

- * Varied shifts
- * 5 days/week
- * Be part of a team



RPS
ROADWAY PACKAGE SYSTEM