

Why students fell short

By JIM GOODBURNE
LAYOUT-EDITOR

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is part two of a three part series dealing with the poor academic achievement of students during the fall 1993 semester. The instructors who took time to contribute their viewpoints did so out of concern and with the hope of helping to solve the problem.

The fact that more students got lower grades than usual during the fall '93 semester has been well established. But the question remains . . . Why?

"We know that generations of people are different," offered Roger Phillips, English instructor. "We're looking at a view of the world that is different in this group of students than we've ever seen before. They stopped laughing at my jokes three years ago. Now I saw that as a sign of my age, but also it was a sign of a radical change in cultural literacy. They have different cultural references than we had, so they don't laugh at the same things."

Poor prospects in the job market may be contributing to the lull in student achievement. If students feel little hope of finding work once out of school, they may not apply themselves in the classroom.

"By the same token, they don't value the same things," added Phillips. "This is also a generation that is looking at last year's college graduates, and everything they hear on the news is that those people can't find jobs."

"This attitude that's driven

by the lack of job opportunity affects primarily the brighter students who are aware of it. I'm not sure that most students are even aware of what the job market is," said Keith Titus.

Titus felt that the problem may instead be generated by a reluctance to give up being a teenager. "Why the hell would you want to give up this world where things are given to you, where you can be irresponsible?"

ACC's policy of dropping classes was targeted as a vehicle for students who don't want to face responsibility. The system allows a student to drop a class up to the last day before finals are taken.

Once a class is dropped, a grade will not be given; therefore if a student is failing a class and drops it, the failing grade is erased from his record.

"What we've taken away from them with the drop policy is the ability to fail," said Titus.

According to Phillips, the drop policy has other implications. "They are delaying—perhaps adulthood as well—but they are delaying their exit from this institution, and their graduation. Probably what they are doing is biding their time because they know that until things change economically, they're not going to have a whole lot of hope anyway."

Jim Miesen, English instructor, focused more on an individual basis. "There are more aimless people. Without a goal or an aim, you can't work—you're in limbo. Look at the number of people who decline their major as undecided/un-

known. It seems to increase all the time."

In the personal writing of students, Phillips notes an unusually high degree of depression. "I see much more depression about what kinds of families they can build, family situations that are very depressing to them, and they are very unhappy. That depression, I think, is all part of the package."

Another potential contributor to the lack of student accomplishment is television. The obvious problem is the use of time. But time spent staring at a screen instead of studying is not the only problem.

"You sit down and you watch a program that is severed into little pieces, so that you can pay attention for a few minutes and then go get a sandwich and not miss anything. You don't have to make any effort to be involved in it or understand it because everything is given to you at about a third grade level," said Titus.

Music videos and commercials flash bits of information at a high rate of speed, roughly two to three seconds apiece. The result is a shorter attention span. Students may find it hard to concentrate for a full forty minute lecture.

Before a solution may be offered, the cause of the problem must be identified. Poor grades show up in the books, but the reasons behind the grades can only be surmised. These instructor's comments certainly provide food for thought.

In the last issue of *The Polemic*, a poll was included with part one of the series dealing with poor academic achievement at ACC during the fall '93 semester.

Students were asked to share, anonymously, the reasons why they received poor grades.

The response was underwhelming. Only three people took the time to return our poll.

As Keith Titus, speech instructor, said of the students, "They just don't seem to care." It looks like he's got them pegged.

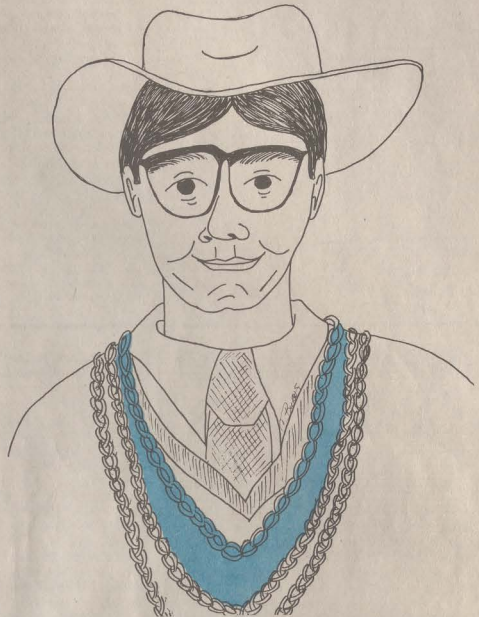
The three that we did get were interesting:

**Grade Received: E
Whose Fault? Mine.**
Did you seek help at the Learning Center? No
Grade would've been higher if: I'd gone to class & studied more.
Comment: "I was simply not motivated . . . I didn't care -- I did what I wanted and I'm paying now."

**Grade Received: E
Whose Fault? Instructor's, Class Size**
Did you seek help at the Learning Center? Yes.
Grade would've been higher if: I'd gone to class & studied more.
Comment: "If the Phy. Science class was split into two sections I would have passed and my instructor could have spent more time with his class."

**Grade Received: A-
Whose Fault? Mine.**
Did you seek help at the Learning Center? Yes.
Grade would've been higher if: I'd studied more.
Comment: "We come to school to study & learn; whether the instructor is good or bad doesn't matter. It's our job to work hard for the grade. The grade you get, you deserve."

Guess Who?



Polemic cartoonist Carol Burns has drawn this caricature of an ACC professor as part of a contest. If you can identify this instructor, please fill out the included entry form and drop it off at *The Polemic* office by 5:00 p.m. on March 2, 1994. The winner will be selected at random and notified on March 3. He/she will receive a free extra value meal, courtesy of McDonald's® Restaurant of Alpena.

Entry Form (Please Print)
Your Guess:
Name:
Address:
Phone:

Greenwood places in state-wide contest

By SCOTT REED
STAFF WRITER

essay contest she entered last semester.

Rachel Greenwood, a student at ACC, took second place in the statewide LAND (Liberal Arts Network of Development)

The essay, a touching piece about Rachel's mother's battle with breast cancer, started out as an assignment in Dr. Richard Lessard's advanced composition

course. But after spending the whole semester writing, rewriting, revising and editing, the paper became less of an assignment and more of a way to express her inner feelings, according to Greenwood.

Every community college in Michigan took part in the LAND contest. Five judges from five different colleges, Kellogg Gogebic, Kirtland, Delta and Kalamazoo Valley, decided the fate of all of the authors who participated.

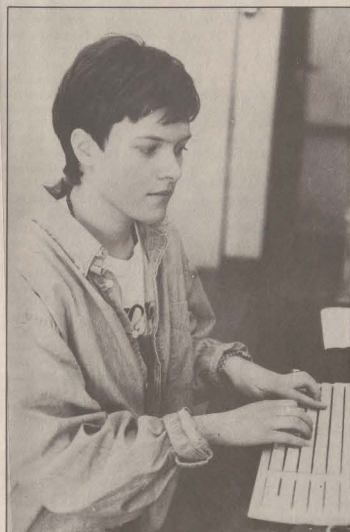
Each college could submit only one entry per category (essays, short stories, and poems), meaning Greenwood's essay was chosen to represent ACC.

To take second place in such a vast contest was an honor to Greenwood, but she feels she couldn't have done it without the English instructors she has had. She is grateful especially to Dr. Lessard.

"If he hadn't nearly put a gun to my head," Greenwood says jokingly, "I never would have sent it in."

Dr. Lessard says, "Rachel has an excellent sense of what will be important to her readers and she is able to take control of the tone she wants to present. She is also a meticulous reviser who chooses her language carefully — all qualities which make her very deserving of this honor."

Greenwood will spend today, tomorrow and Friday as a guest of the Dearborn Hotel in Dearborn, where she will be presented with a \$100 check in recognition of her outstanding writing talent.



Rachel Greenwood, second place winner of the Michigan wide LAND essay contest, composes at the computer.

Photo by Linda Simpsons



"Apparently, some kids hooked up your grandmother's pacemaker to The Clapper."

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