

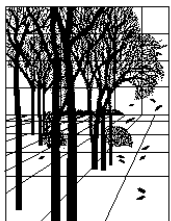
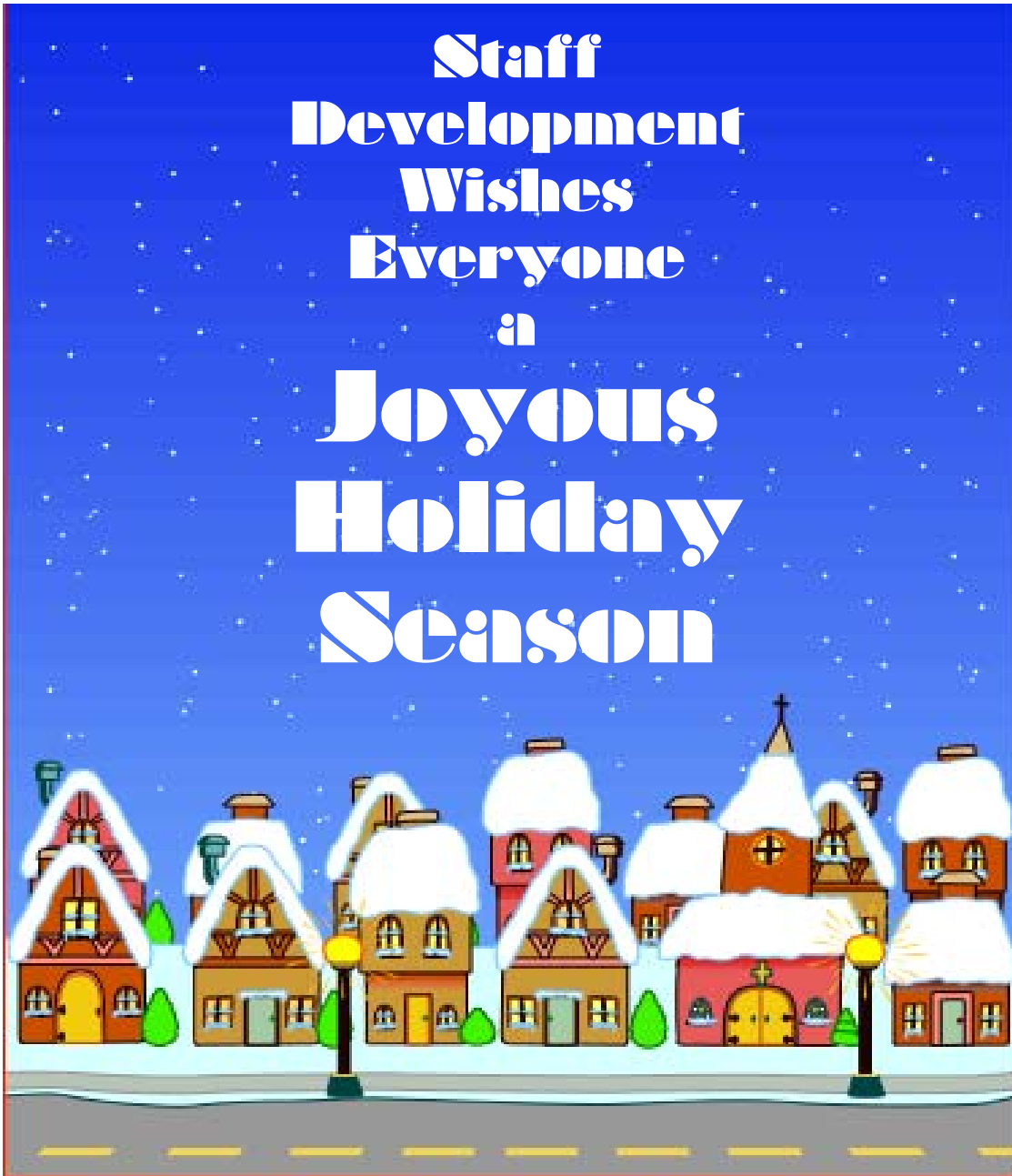
Visions

Quinsigamond Community College



Winter Solstice
2001

A Newsletter of the Staff Development Committee



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A group of nine faculty and staff from the Early Childhood Program at Quinsigamond Community College attended the New England Association for the Education of Young Children Conference in Portland, Maine held from April 4 to 7. The conference was dedicated to the memory of Carol Lawson. As stated in the conference catalogue Carol was an educational leader, "who exemplified the level of professionalism toward which we all strive." Last year, as you may recall, this conference was held in Worcester and Carol, in her role, as President of the Worcester Area Association for the Education of Young Children was the coordinator.

This conference, attended by more than two thousand early childhood educators in New England, provided a wide variety of workshops and training events for those working directly with young children and their families, for students of Early Childhood Education and for faculty teaching Early Childhood Education related courses. Our nine representatives took advantage of the diverse workshop offerings open to us. Collectively we were able to benefit from almost every aspect of the conference.

Charlene Mara and Cathy O'Brien took part in the NAEYC Accreditation Training and are now licensed validators ready to assess other early childhood centers and programs as they go through the national accreditation process.


Staff of the Quinsigamond Children's School took part in such workshops as: *Art for the Brain's Sake*: In this workshop presenters made connections between a strong music and arts program in the preschool and brain development. *Sing It Say It*: Research was shared connecting music, math and science to support the young child's awareness of spatial relationships, language acquisition and natural - rhythmic skills. Practical ideas for motivating children to explore music were also shared. *Story Telling*: A wide variety of story telling techniques was demonstrated through group participation in story telling. *How to Handle Stress*: Some were amazed to learn that we need stress in our lives and one might think of stress as the "spice of our lives". But of too much spice can lead to serious indigestion, just as too much stress can be harmful to both our physical and mental well being. When stress does occur it is important to recognize it and deal with it. Remember body and mind work together. It is important to find someone you can talk to about your stress. Knowing when to ask for help can prevent serious problems. Several additional strategies for dealing with stress were articulated and the session closed with a group meditation.

Faculty had an opportunity to attend some teacher training workshops and talk with early childhood educators from technical colleges, four-year programs and other regional community colleges professors. A few of these workshops included:

Deb Curtis and Chuck Bayles from Learning Partners, Inc. located in Barre, Vermont facilitated a workshop on *Planning Your Professional Growth*. This interactive workshop took the participants through a step-by-step plan to help students and working professionals develop and monitor their own professional growth. Strategies and resources were shared for assessing current knowledge. Methodology for identifying ones knowledge gaps were employed and action plans were developed for closing those gaps. Participants were encouraged to celebrate their learning and to recognize small steps as well as those of a more substantial nature.

Patty Hnatiuk from The Center for Career Development in Early Care and Education at Wheelock College monitored a panel of representatives from New Hampshire and Vermont who received grants from the US Department of Labor to implement registered apprenticeship programs in early care and education. In each case a mentor teacher supported a less experienced teacher and both mentor and apprentice were able to take early childhood courses and advance their education. In New Hampshire these courses were offered on line and in Vermont a series of courses were offered at various locations around the state.

In another workshop titled *Maine Roads to Quality: You're on the Road -Where Are You Going?* Pricilla Armstrong, Faith McMullen and Marilyn Russell presented Maine's career pathways, The Training Approval System for the state. In this plan early childhood educators are encouraged to register with the state and identify the training they have completed and the training still needed. Those registered are notified of training offered in their area. At a later date if one wants to convert

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Orange County Math Conference by Diane Hendrickson

In April, I attended the 79th Annual meeting of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics at the Orange County Conference Center in Florida. This amazing facility hosted over 18,000 mathematics teachers at more than 1,100 workshops. In order to benefit fully from the many diverse offerings, it was recommended that we select one or two themes and follow them throughout the various sessions. I chose the themes of math anxiety and statistics. The conference title, Math World:

New Standards for the New Millennium, set the focus on how these standards impact all of us, whether we teach at grade 1 or at the college level. This thread was evident throughout.

The first session on math anxiety shared the experiences of a high school remedial math teacher, Amy Bell from Plantation, Florida. Much that she found with her classes can be found at the college level also. Students lack confidence in their math skills as a result of a bad experience rather than lack of innate skills. By helping them combat this anxiety they come to realize that they can learn math after all!

Suggestions for this begin with the human element. We, as educators, have to be approachable. We have to maintain a sense of humor. Perhaps the students do not even realize when they become anxious. I'm sure we have all heard the rationale "I can't do math. My mother (father?) can't do it either. It must be genetic!" Once they become comfortable with the teacher, the tasks we ask of them become easier for them to accomplish. Often, something as simple as not using the words "test" and "exam" ease tension.

Another important technique is becoming aware of the learning style of each student. We should include, in every class, approaches that the visual, auditory and kinetic learner can latch on to. When students understand that we realize what they need in the classroom that also relaxes them.

The focus on project-based evaluations is also very helpful. Just as all students do not learn the same way, they all do not respond to the same type of exam. By incorporating some projects for course evaluations, we address test anxiety problems.

The statistics strand of the conference emphasized the growth of this area of mathematics over the past twenty years. Many of today's mathematics teachers did not have a formal statistics course even at the college level. In the past, statistics was not thought to have the rigor of a course mathematics major would take. However, this has changed. The presenter of this workshop, Jim Bohan of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, admitted to being a reformed purist! Although he has an advanced degree in Abstract Algebra, he returned to school at age 52 to earn another degree in applied statistics! He stressed not getting bogged down in strict formulas but using the discovery method of how and why things relate. Today, even preschool children learn the basics of statistics when they chart the weather and graph the number of days of rain, etc. This workshop was addressed to educators from grades K through college, so the emphasis was on how to incorporate various topics into the entire curriculum. In the not too distant future, we will be seeing students much more familiar with statistical concepts and not dread having to take such a course at the college level!

Another workshop talked about dealing with the question of "When will I ever use this". By introducing and using open-end problems and practical applications we can show the relevance to even the most reluctant math student.

A highlight of the conference was a workshop with Stone Philips, the commentator for NBC News Dateline. He spoke about how education is the foundation for the United States and the world. He credits love mathematics to a second grade teacher who instilled this in him.



Digital Photography REDUX! by Paul Connell

In the October and November issues of *Visions*, we included an ongoing dialogue on digital photography. This is another follow-up.

I discovered that you *can*, indeed, print black and white photos on your inkjet printer. It turns out that I was using an earlier version of *Photoshop*, which for some reason, didn't like to print black-and-white pictures. Why? Well, as they used to say in Catholic School—"It's a mystery." When I upgraded to the new version of *Photoshop 6*, NO PROBLEM!

One of the important things I'm using digital imaging for:

I'm building a house in Maine—four hours away from here, so most of what I do is by remote control. When I show up on the weekends, the builder isn't there. When he shows up during the week, I'm not there. We communicate by fax and by phone.

When I went to look at the windows he installed, I really didn't like the way he fit the windows into the dormers. Furthermore, he needed to finish the job right away. I knew what they "should" look like, but how could I convey that image exactly to him, and convey it instantly?

I took a digital photo of his installation and downloaded it to *Photoshop*. I then scanned in a photo of a window I liked and

pasted onto one of the dormers (see photo below). I then faxed him the document right from my computer. This helped him see *exactly* what I wanted and—maybe more importantly, helped me see exactly what I wanted.

Seems to me that there ought to be some educational use for this process? What d'ya think? How do YOU think YOU might use something like this.

If this kind of thing intrigues you, I'm offering a workshop in using the digital camera in Feb 6th and 13th from 1:30-3:30. I'll keep you posted.



A Rewarding Out-of-the-Country Conference *by Stephen Zona*

Usually warm temperatures, a very safe city, and a conference full of methodologies and online information made my visit to Toronto an enjoyable and rewarding visit. What follows are the highlights of my conference workshops at the American Mathematical Association for Two Year Colleges National Conference.

One of my sessions was on creating an eclectic toolbelt. In this session the presenter used all modalities to reach her students.

For example, students worked in groups with 40 flashcards and they had to match problems with the multiple solutions. A different activity required students to match the graph with the equation, which could prove very helpful at a higher level math course when the students need to understand the difference between/among linear, quadratic, exponential, and cubic functions. We also got to see variations on any theme.

A different concept which I have not seen before had the presenter lecturing while showing a PowerPoint presentation (You had to be there). Flashing slides were shown on an endless loop throughout the presentation. Definitions, problems, visual examples, graphs, and animations were used as the presenter lectured. This further clarified the abstract concept, brought it down to the concrete level, and met the various learning styles.

At another workshop a group of faculty got an NSF grant to develop real-life math activities in/from the workplace. These faculty went out in the community and interviewed some of

the industries to find out how these people used math in the workplace. From this information, the faculty created a number of real-life activities for their math classes, most of which were Real Player videos. This now prevents students from saying the old cliché “When am I ever going to use this?”

Another workshop was on best practices for distance learning in math. The presenter went through the various platforms, went through the do’s and don’ts of an online class, and then gave us some good email addresses from which we can see other websites on this network of homepages that she has facilitated.

Some of my other workshops included commercial product presentations and round table discussions for online learning.

Finally, one workshop that I was impressed the most by was on **EXPLOREMATH.COM**. Presently, this is a free site, if you register. The whole site is keyed in on discovery learning. An enormous amount of time was put in to create interactive applets, worksheets, teacher lesson plans, and numerous creative activities. I encourage and urge each of you math faculty (and others who will use math in their classes) to check out this site and register for it while it is still a free site. This is a must see site.

In closing, my conference was worthwhile. Clearly, it gave me many sites to visit, new activities to try in my classes, more information on some of the commercial products that I already have, and a lot of good online information.

Educating Young Children *continued from p. 2*

some of the training to college credit the technical colleges assist in that effort.

As a faculty we also had the opportunity to revisit some of last summer’s Reggio Emilia Institute when attending Project Work: *Kindergarten Children and Teachers in Partnership*. Mary Jane Moran and two of her students from the University of New Hampshire presented this workshop. Covering both children’s and student intern’s long term exploration of clay and the investigation of photosynthesis, this workshop offered both a teacher training component and American adaptations of Reggio Emilia’s preschool programming.

The educational philosophy is based on teachings and writings from John Dewey, Lev Vygotsky, Jean Piaget, Lillian Katz and Reggio Emilia’s school system. These teachings form the theoretical base for our Early Childhood Education Program here at Quinsigamond Community College. The Children’s School incorporates developmentally appropriate practices, emergent and child centered curriculum as well as observation when planning curriculum. Not only do the children attending the program benefit from this educational experience but also the student teachers are exposed to state of the art teaching on a daily basis.

The interests and curiosities of the children determined the topics for projects. The teachers and children worked together to research the topic and interact with the materials, observing those interactions and looking up information in books. The children would make hypotheses, do future obser-

ventions and interact with materials. The final stage of the project work was the representation of their observations and findings in drawings, paintings, stories, dramatizations, photographs, charts and three-dimensional sculptures.

In their presentation, the student interns emphasized the way children learn is in developing higher order of thinking. This was achieved through an integrated curriculum, promoting children’s mode of expression (art, music, story telling, story writing and dramatizations) critical thinking and joint problem solving activities. This again was a familiar methodology and is also shared by our programs here.

The result from this workshop was an affirmation that some four-year colleges share what we are doing in our program. The workshop also gave some ideas on how to achieve these goals with student teachers. The challenge will be to modify the process for a two-year program for our own student teachers.

In addition to the educational benefits of this conference the early childhood faculty and staff were also able to spend some time together socially. This experience gave us the much-needed opportunity to exchange ideas and talk informally about our accomplishments, our sorrows, and our struggles of the past year. It allowed us time to clarify our hopes and aspirations for the coming year and gave us a renewed source of energy for what lies ahead.

Fred Pryor Seminar “How to Supervise People” by Michael J. Brosnahan

On April 19, 2011 attended a Fred Pryor Seminar on “How to Supervise People.” The presenter was Beth Bednar, a former television news anchor and business-women from Minnesota. I liked her presentation style which was a combination of lecture and class participation. She had to work fast to cover a majority of the topics, however the class was never “rushed”, and she always stopped to answer any questions we had.

The class consisted of people in all lines of work: medical, construction, education, state agency, service industry, etc. and, it consisted of present day supervisors, soon to be supervisors, and those contemplating becoming a supervisor. It was a good mix, and Ms Bednar used that to her advantage in presenting problems to the group that were not peculiar to just one line of work. We got to see that many of the problems faced by supervisory personnel are the same no matter what the institution.

In “Making the Transition to Supervision”, we saw that an occupational change has occurred, we’re no longer doing the job but seeing that others get the job done. We now manage others’ time not only our own. The job, all of a sudden, becomes “people related” and your sense of job satisfaction is more abstract. Satisfaction sometimes has to come from a sense of accomplishment in helping someone develop their talents, managing a crisis effectively or just plain “getting the job done”. You find that your problems become “long term” in that you never really get rid of them all, you finish one project and another pops up almost immediately. Your key resource is your people. Sink or swim, you’re in it together. There is a shift in job evaluation, you’re cast into a different role, you no longer “do” the work, it is your responsibility to “see” that the work gets done. You’re faced with the “push-pull” reality ... you are pushed into a number of jobs you are not particularly trained to deal with, while at the same time you are pulled back by things you liked to do but can’t. The problem is to learn to manage anxiety over the “push” while not slipping back into comfort zones associated with the “pull”.

In “Overcoming the Early Problems” it was stressed that YOU were usually the controlling factor in most situations. Event plus response equals outcome ($E + R = O$) ... your response to anything will affect the outcome. It was also stressed that 55% of what we communicate is through body language, 38% is through vocal tone, and the last 7% is through words ... so it’s not so much as what you say but HOW you say it. We must learn to be active listeners, which is one of the most used but least taught skills in supervision. To develop active listening skills, follow the eight rules:

1. Stop talking. Eliminate distractions. Give your full attention.
2. Get relaxed. Put the other person at ease. Don’t rush them.
3. Don’t interrupt. Allow them to “VENT”. Be patient.
4. Empathize. Make a statement of regret. Be genuine. Ask for their help.
5. Paraphrase. Try to summarize what you’ve just heard and restate it. This helps diffuse the tension and show the employee you really are listening.



6. Ask open-ended questions. Use questions for understanding and clarification.
7. Use silence. Don’t be afraid of tension. Time perceptions get terribly distorted under tense circumstances.
8. Allow reflection. In many cases the best role we can play is that of a sounding board for our employees.

Remember to **SOFTEN** things ... **S**mile, **O**pen posture (body language), **F**orward (lean forward), **T**erritory (don’t invade their space), **E**ye contact, **N**od (approval/understanding).

Good leaders have the following traits: They care for and respect the people they lead, they have a clear vision and communicate well, they listen and build consensus, and they develop and build their people (they take pride in the success of their employees).

We touched on other subjects such as Choosing a Leadership Style, The Realities of Choice, Negative Attitudes, Common Mistakes to Avoid, Building a Positive Work Climate, Managing Change, Guidelines for Pinpointing Problems, Motivational Techniques. We ended the seminar with a question/answer, problem solving segment.

One of the attendees complained that he had a worker who did little if any work, had been with the department for over three months and didn’t seem to understand any part of their job and he felt that they never would fully understand what was expected of them ... his question to the group was “what do you do with an employee like this?” The tension was cut when “yours truly” shouted simply “you promote him to Manager!” Thus ended our seven hours of SUPERVISORY TRAINING.

I’m a firm believer that it is possible to be a “good guy” and still be an effective supervisor. This seminar has given me some tools to use to this end. This seminar was by no means a rehashing of things already known. There were many good ideas presented and the seminar manual will be very useful tool. I would recommend this seminar to anyone interested in “moving up the ladder”. The best advice I can give any potential supervisor would be “DON’T FORGET WHERE YOU CAME FROM ... NONE OF US WERE BORN SUPERVISORS ... YOU’RE ONLY AS GOOD AS THE PEOPLE THAT WORK FOR YOU. DON’T FORGET THAT, AND LET THEM KNOW YOU APPRECIATE THEM.”

The “Responsible” Student—Editorial by Paul Connell

Visions had reprinted the following article a while back, but I thought that it deserved being said again. All of us who teach are feeling the ever-increasing weight of the responsibility for student learning being dumped in *our* laps. If Johnny or Jeannie can’t read, write, or do math, then it’s obviously our fault.

Never mind that Johnny and Jeannie don’t come to class, don’t do the assignments, can’t think critically, and have highly unrealistic expectations, fostered by an educational system that promotes an Alice-in-Wonderland mantra of “self-esteem” instead of self-responsibility and sacrifice. It doesn’t matter. It’s something that *we* need to work on.

Never mind that we have to compete with the Worldwide Web and the media that foster “whiz-bang,” prurient emotionalism, and senseless violence, in an ever-constricting

circle of shortening attention spans. It’s still our fault.

And, if we don’t make ourselves responsible for every aspect of Johnnie and Jeannie’s well-being, hey, they get to “shoot” at us, come evaluation time and put the fault where it belongs—squarely on the shoulders of the nearest authority figure—guess who that is?

On a grimmer note—lately, younger students have been getting (literally) to shoot at teachers and classmates to express themselves—but we all know that it’s “caused” by guns or by our failure to build their self-esteem, or by whatever. It’s NEVER “caused” by the young students who actually DO it, or by the outrageously rude and violent pop-cultural icons their mythos embraces! Nope. It’s gotta be *our* fault. Where have we failed...

Ahh, nothing like a good rant to clear the sinuses!

by Joyce C. Bremer

I have always hoped to encounter an ideal class, a class consisting entirely of motivated, responsible, and dedicated students. Unfortunately, I have never encountered such a class. Many students do not meet my idealistic expectations. Are these students really irresponsible and not dedicated to the educational process, or are they simply unaware of what is expected of them at the college level? Being the eternal optimist, I have concluded that the actual problem is that many students really do not understand what is expected of them, perhaps not only in school but also in the workplace.

Desiring to more fully and clearly explain my expectations, I now include a “Letter to the Student,” in my syllabus. This letter not only describes my classroom expectations, it also describes workplace expectations to the student. The first semester that I included my letter in the syllabus, I was amazed by the number of students who said this was the first time that an instructor’s expectations were so clearly expressed. While this letter may not guarantee the “ideal class,” my students are now more aware of my expectations and, as a result, are more willing to try to meet those expectations.

An Open Letter to My Students

Attending college is analogous to being employed. Success on the job is achieved only with hard work and effort. This is also true of college.

Your employer expects you to be on the job everyday and to be on time and prepared to work each day. You are allowed only a specific number of sick days each year after which your pay is “docked.” This is also true of economics class. Regular and prompt attendance is essential, and your “sick” days are limited (see syllabus). Excessive absences will result in a loss of “pay” (grade).

Meetings are an essential part of the workplace, and everyone is expected to attend regularly and contribute to the discussion. If you miss an excessive number of meetings and / or do not share vital information, your employment success is in jeopardy. The same holds true for this class. You are not only expected to attend all of our “meet-

ings,” but you are expected to contribute to our discussion and analysis of issues. This requires that you come to each class prepared to discuss the assigned material. Failure to do so will put your success in jeopardy and can result in a reduction in your “salary” (grade).

Your employer requires you to submit all reports on time. Failure to do so will endanger your employer’s business and your success. The same is true for this class. All “reports” (tests and papers) are due at the scheduled time (see syllabus). If, for a justified reason, you will not be able to meet the time schedule, you must notify me, just as you would contact your employer if you needed an extension. However, as in the workplace, such extensions do not come without a cost. Extensions result in a decrease in your “salary” (grade).

Performance reviews occur periodically in the workplace, and your employer determines the degree of your success during these reviews. Such is the case in this class. The “performance reviews” for economics class are quizzes and exams (see syllabus). These reviews require you to show not only your knowledge of the material, but also your ability to use this knowledge in real-world situations. Your “pay” (grade) depends upon the magnitude of your performance.

If you attend class regularly, participate in class discussions, and submit all materials, well-prepared and in a timely fashion, you have the potential to excel in this class. I am looking forward to working with you and to learning with you. I am always available if you need assistance. Welcome and good luck!

Joyce C. Bremer,
Assistant Professor, Economics

For further information, contact the author at Oakton Community College, 1600 East Golf Road, Des Plaines, Illinois 60016-1268. e-mail:

jbremer@oakton.edu

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