

Faculty Showcase '06

Sponsored by Academic Technology at Simmons College



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Goals

- Use technology to drive a learning community to explore practical interdisciplinary problems rather than content materials of separate disciplines
- Seamlessly integrate all class activities and involve students with each other and with course content 24/7
- Use technology to create, revise, store, share and present their intellectual content



The Tao of Shoe: Learning Communities Online

Project Overview

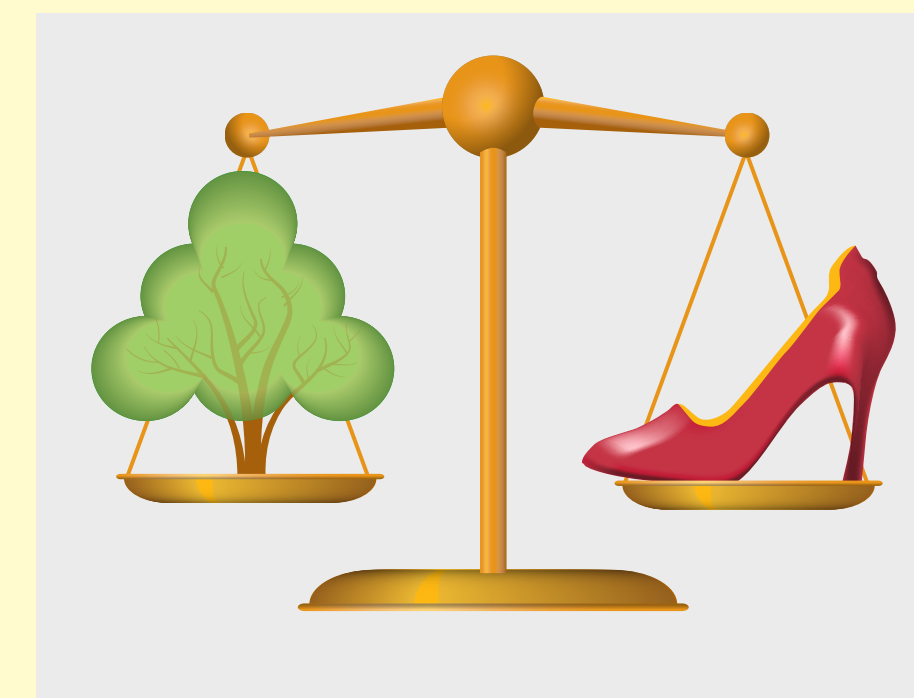
“Tao” – a Chinese term meaning the way, the way humans should follow; “Shoe” – a consumer good that embodies principles of chemistry, raises ethical issues with respect to the environment, and demonstrates the value of green chemistry.

Our Learning Community will focus on the intersection of the fields of green chemistry and environmental ethics. Green chemistry involves the invention, design and application of chemical products and processes to reduce or to eliminate the use and generation of hazardous substances. Environmental ethics is the study of the nature and extent of our moral obligations to the environment. Together, these two fields of inquiry raise issues and provide answers to very practical questions concerning our:

- relation to the natural world of animals, plants, and the land;
- use and consumption of natural resources;
- relations to the environments of other countries and cultures; and
- obligations to advocate for change.

There are six main objectives of this Learning Community:

1. provide students with a theoretical, scientific and practical understanding of the nature of environmental problems;
2. help students develop critical thinking, writing, and laboratory skills necessary to the recognition, formulation, and assessment of environmental problems and proposed solutions;
3. provide the opportunity for students to develop creative thinking skills and advocacy abilities;
4. help students develop and defend their own environmental ethic;
5. help students formulate a reasonable project that can be accomplished in a given amount of time; and
6. help students design, conduct, summarize and present a research project that involves social conscience.



Applications Beyond

Our Learning Community will:

- serve as a model of how two disparate fields can be brought together using technology to form a nurturing environment that fosters interdisciplinary learning driven by problems rather than disciplines;
- provide a realistic assessment of time and effort required to develop a rich-interdisciplinary, online learning environment;
- determine how effective the online environment is in fostering meaningful community; and
- increase efficiency in designing hybrid courses through reuse of components.