

“I Will Not Justify That Question With An Answer.”

By: Nella Citino, Chair, Dept. of Visual Arts

Madison Media Institute Madison Media Institute (MMI) teaches media. That’s all. Bottom line. There are no options for students if they want to change their career path to . . . let’s say nursing. We teach students for sixty weeks straight, immerse them in the study of media, and then send them on their way and we hope a job or internship will get them in the industry.

We can give the students as many hands-on experiences because that’s what we’re about. It’s what our students want. However, real world experience is something that is achieved on one’s own. As part of my responsibilities as department chair, I try my best to find outside work, film competitions, freelance opportunities and small projects for the students while they are here. That’s my agenda.

Recently, MMI held a 48 hour film competition for students to get them started on working with outside resources and material. This extracurricular activity has been based off of the regional 48 Hour Film Project. As I talk with students, I realize that this is one of the most important experiences at MMI. Why? Well, the model of the film project is basic. They are to create a 4-6 minute film and are given:

- a concept (somebody wakes up and has amnesia)
- a prop (stapler)
- a given line (“I will not justify that question with an answer”)

The most difficult part of this project is the deadline. Students have 48 hours to pull together a short video including writing, editing and shooting. Most students think 48 hours is a long time until they get down to the wire. Panic sets in, ideas are dropped, and editing is done as quickly as possible. Other than a short film, very little sleep, and creative differences, what do they get out of it? Well, I could say “I will not justify that question with an answer,” but honestly the most important thing they get is . . . confidence.

For some reason, students who participate in extracurricular and job-related activities are placed more quickly and are working in the industry faster than if they don’t participate in anything. The numbers don’t lie. As a career college, our accreditation is based on getting students jobs. We are required to place a minimum of 70% of our graduating students. When students participate in outside activities, this has been achievable and we constantly exceed our required employment rate. We can only teach them so much, but students really learn when they apply those principles outside of the classroom. It’s good to see a light go on and students standing up a little straighter. And when I’m asked, “What makes you think you can find jobs for these students?” I respond with, “I will not justify that question with answer.” To me, it’s obvious.