

# I love seeing the 'aha' moment



By Jeanette Pizarro-Ahumada

**P**eter Murr believes in his students.

Just a little over a year into his career as a full-time Industrial Technology Instructor at Montcalm Community College, Murr said he has enjoyed getting to see his students gain knowledge in welding and the welding field. His love for welding and the trades is evident as he passionately teaches his courses at MCC's Greenville campus.

"I teach because I love seeing the 'aha' moment when a student understands and can apply their knowledge," Murr said. "I love watching them learn a concept and apply it."

Before joining the MCC family, Murr worked at a variety of companies as a welding engineer, robotics programmer and welding trainer. This well-rounded experience in welding and robotics helps him identify student needs and provide the training needed to support them in their coursework.

Murr, who earned an associate degree in Applied Science Welding Technology from Grand Rapids Community College, teaches various welding classes, as well as a class in metallurgy and basic robotics. In these classes, students are taught not only how to weld, but how to weld with precision.

Murr said one of the most valuable skills he teaches is how to spot a defective weld and how to avoid making them. He said most students enter his classes with little knowledge about welding but leave as high-quality welders.



*MCC Industrial Technology Instructor Peter Murr brings extensive industry experience to the classroom.*

"My core philosophy is anyone can do anything if they put the time into it," Murr said.

Alongside his associate degree, Murr has certifications as a welding inspector and educator from the American Welding Society. He also has a certification in basic operations, arc tool and maintenance from FANUC North America.

"Each day, my goal is to get the students who need more help, the help that they need and get them to where they need to be," Murr said. "My goals for students are performance based, which is passing a standardized American Welding Society qualification test. This credential is industry-recognized proof of their welding skills to support them as they enter the job market." ■

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*– Peter Murr*

# facultyfocus

my door  
is **always**  
open

By Shanika P. Carter

**B**eginning his higher education in a community college setting, Dr. Todd Adkins identifies with the experience he provides students in this same environment.

Dr. Adkins joined MCC in August as a social science instructor.

He said student success, as well as experiential learning, a component of student success, are goals he strives to achieve in the classroom, utilizing an engaging approach in a friendly, supportive, collaborative and exciting learning environment.

A Michigan native, Dr. Adkins teaches the “American Political System” course, which is an introduction to political science.

“Students know that my door is always open for one-on-one assistance in course planning, study strategizing, or overall academic advising,” said Adkins, who takes a proactive approach with his students who may be reluctant to ask for help. “I regularly hold small seminars on productive study methods, test-taking skills, and time-management approaches during my office hours, after class and through special appointments.”

Having earned his Bachelor of Science (B.S.) degree from Western Michigan University and his Juris Doctor (J.D.) degree from the University of Iowa, Adkins then went on to the University of Notre Dame to earn both his Master of Arts (M.A.) degree and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.). Adkins taught at Southwestern Michigan College, eventually becoming director of the criminal justice program at the college, which is where he established an internship program for students to gain hands-on experience with law enforcement agencies in the community.

An adjunct instructor at the University of Notre Dame as well, Adkins’ previous professional background was in government relations and public affairs for national organizations and corporations for nearly two decades.



*Social Science Instructor Dr. Todd Adkins enjoys interacting with students and encouraging them to listen and consider viewpoints beyond their own.*

This experience, according to Adkins, equipped him for connecting theory with practice for students in first-hand detail. This has included collaborations in the classroom in which Adkins can guide student learning with real-world understanding of institutions and actors on the landscape.

Considering current academic challenges, Adkins strives for students to see beyond their own “echo chambers.”

“Political scientists have shown, quite clearly, that being exposed to cross cutting information is critical to developing tolerance, critical thinking and civic engagement more broadly. As the nation has grown hyper-partisan in recent years, the public’s tendency to retreat to their echo-chambers has increased as well,” explained Dr. Adkins, who encourages students to listen and carefully consider viewpoints beyond their own.

Although Dr. Adkins utilizes various instructional methods, he favors interactive lectures, which opens the door to promoting student understanding through exposure to diverse backgrounds and viewpoints. He said the diversity in teaching students at different institutions across a wide array of courses has also been beneficial in his instruction.

“This diversity of experience has served me well in developing a teaching style that is accessible to a range of students from assorted backgrounds and with varied levels of academic preparation,” Dr. Adkins said. “I have experienced, first-hand, how critically important it is to ‘meet my students where they are’ before I can help take them where they want to be.” ■