

From the Alumni Council Chair

It is an honor to be elected Chair of Virginia Western's Alumni Council. In just two years the Alumni Association has evolved into an organization dedicated to fostering a mutually beneficial relationship between the College, its alumni and the community at large.

The Alumni Association supports activities that prepare students for employment, further education and promote active citizenship in the local, national and global community. Our mission also includes providing an avenue for interaction between alumni, friends and the College, and continued support of Virginia Western's Educational Foundation.

We are fast becoming a strong, active organization with many beneficial ties to our community. We invite you to become a part of our Alumni Association...we're making a difference in the lives of our students, alumni and community.

~Shirl Duke Lamanca

Time Capsule

In celebration of Virginia Western's 40th Anniversary, the Alumni Association is sponsoring a Time Capsule that will be sealed at "Oktoberfest, OktoberInvest" on October 19. All alumni are encouraged to submit items for possible inclusion. For more information visit, viriniawestern.edu/alumni and click News & Events or contact Erik Williams, Alumni Relations Coordinator at (540) 857-8914 or ewilliams@vwccs.edu.



Western Students Transfer Creativity to Real-World Business

Virginia Western alumni are already privy to some of the innovative and exciting solutions Western continuously delivers to its students and the community. It's the reason more and more students—of all ages and backgrounds—are choosing its invigorating path. So, it's not surprising Western students—and an area business—recently



benefited from yet one more inventive initiative.

Students from Western's web page and marketing classes recently participated in a real-world project that provided positive outcomes and needed materials for local business Safety and Compliance Services.

According to Michael A. Womack, PMP, owner of Adesso Promotions, a project management and technology solutions company, attending Virginia Western was a "life-changing experience that stuck with me and changed the course of my life." So when he and Frank Dees, adjunct professor at Western and owner of Frank Dees' Consulting, teamed up to help Safety and Compliance Services of Roanoke create a web presence for their training programs, it seemed like a logical succession to involve Western students.

As an alumnus, Womack is "carrying on the tradition" from his past experience at Virginia Western that landed him a job as CMT Sporting Goods' Assistant Art Director after graduation. "To revisit now felt like a match," says Womack. "It seemed right."

Dees had previous experience in similar student/business partnerships and worked with Ramona Coveny, Director of CTE Program Development and Associate Professor of Information Services Technology, to get students involved in the project. "This [project] was fine-tuning them and giving them experience," says Coveny.

The project entailed creating a web presence for Safety and Compliance Services, so training materials could be accessed through the website or CD ROM. It also required converting their current PowerPoint training program to a format that could be utilized through the web or CD ROM. Students had to do research beyond what they were given to maintain copyright guidelines and enhance courses with audio and video clips.

The finished project resulted in the development of three online courses, three presentations and three components: a website; a logo and brochure that worked in conjunction with web graphics regarding color schemes and branding; and an article from Dees' marketing class created from student interviews and

accompanied by student photos that was presented to the *Blue Ridge Business Journal*.

Womack describes the project outcome as a "win-win situation for everyone." Tim Fitzgerald, President of Safety and Compliance Services—a risk management consulting group that specializes in training and program development for small companies to Fortune 500 companies—says, "We needed the development time and creativity of these young people. They saved us a ton of time and gave us a different perspective. They had a nice, clean approach that provided us with a different dimension."

Womack was "impressed with the students' level of commitment toward the project." He adds that students gained great experience from participating and received an acknowledgement and reference from the company.



Christina Crenshaw, a student from Coveny's web graphics class, designed the logo Safety Compliance and Services selected. The company is seeking approval to use her logo nationally. Crenshaw and other students learned how to accept feedback from clients and determine their clients' needs. She says, "I feel better equipped to go into the workforce because of my experience." And what would she tell others? "The client is who you're working for—that's what this job's about."

Dees says that by participating in collaborative projects like this one "we're improving the credentials of students as well as introducing them to the business community so they can collaborate as potential employees."

Although this was the first time both participants experienced completion of a real-world business project as coursework in a college setting, the concept itself is not new. Rather, Womack and Dees have resurrected the idea and call their collaborative initiative "Business Solutions, Focused Learning."

Whatever you call it, Crenshaw says, "It's been a great learning experience I would definitely recommend over and over again."

New colors,
new logo,
new look!

