

Teaching and Learning: Visualizing Our Work

By Martin Springborg

T*eaching and Learning* is a photographic essay that I began in 2005, as a photography instructor at Inver Hills Community College near Minneapolis-St. Paul. At that time, I gave my students and myself an assignment: to document our lives and the lives of our peers outside the safe confines of our studio classroom. In pursuing this documentary project, we observed and shared the many challenges facing both educators and students. Student photographs depicted the reality of attending multiple campuses, as well as balancing coursework with employment, family responsibilities, and what little remained of their social life, while my photographs likewise revealed the many service and scholarship duties faculty also juggle outside of the classroom. Made visible were the many challenges we all face, with the result that we developed new respect for each other and our workloads.

By the close of that first project year, I had built a considerable body of work on the topic of teaching and learning. As I moved on to positions in faculty development and teaching at other institutions, I continued to add to the *Teaching and Learning* project and gradually included more images of college staff and administrators. Eventually, the photographs brought to light a vital necessity of work in higher education: collaboration among people from different institutional sectors. As I continue to work on this project today, its focus is increasingly on our shared responsibility for student persistence and success. Through our collaborative efforts to improve learning experiences and innovative approaches such as learning

Martin Springborg teaches photography and art history in the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system. He also works in the field of educational development, mostly at MnSCU's system office in St. Paul. Related to this work, he currently serves on the Professional and Organizational Development (POD) Network in Higher Education's Board of Directors. Martin can be contacted through his website: <http://springborgphoto.com>.

SPECIAL FOCUS: STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND THE COMMON GOOD

communities and learning environments like fab labs, students should reap the benefits.

In recent years, the *Teaching and Learning* project has been shown and used in many ways. Its photographs have been exhibited as fine art by many institutions of higher education, and as a way to publicly signal an institution's commitment to the value of teaching. In 2013, the California Institute of Technology used the project within its Teaching and Learning programs. New photographs were made at Caltech and used to guide faculty and staff in visually documenting their work as well as to initiate campus dialogues on teaching and learning. The images included here were made within the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities



In preparation for their group speeches, a communications faculty member guides her somewhat anxious students through some warm-up exercises. The focus of this class session is not only on the final result (the speeches), but also the process.

system, specifically at Inver Hills Community College, Hennepin Technical College, and Central Lakes College.

My ultimate intent is to make visible faculty and administrative work — both internally as well as to external policy makers. It remains vital for those of us whose work is concentrated within one area to understand and empathize with colleagues from other campus sectors. It also remains necessary for external stakeholders to understand the work that faculty and administrators are engaged in day-to-day. Some decision makers persist in holding antiquated images and stereotypes of those who find their calling in higher education. The *Teaching and Learning* photographs challenge these outdated stereotypes.



SPECIAL FOCUS: STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND THE COMMON GOOD



▲ What does it mean to be accessible to students and colleagues? These days, it's not enough to open your office door on a twice-a-week schedule. This sociology faculty member connects via email and phone, while also fielding in-person questions.

In this meeting room, faculty members from various disciplines get together to plan the appearance of a guest speaker on campus—part of faculty's efforts to bring the very best resources from off-campus into students' reach. ▼

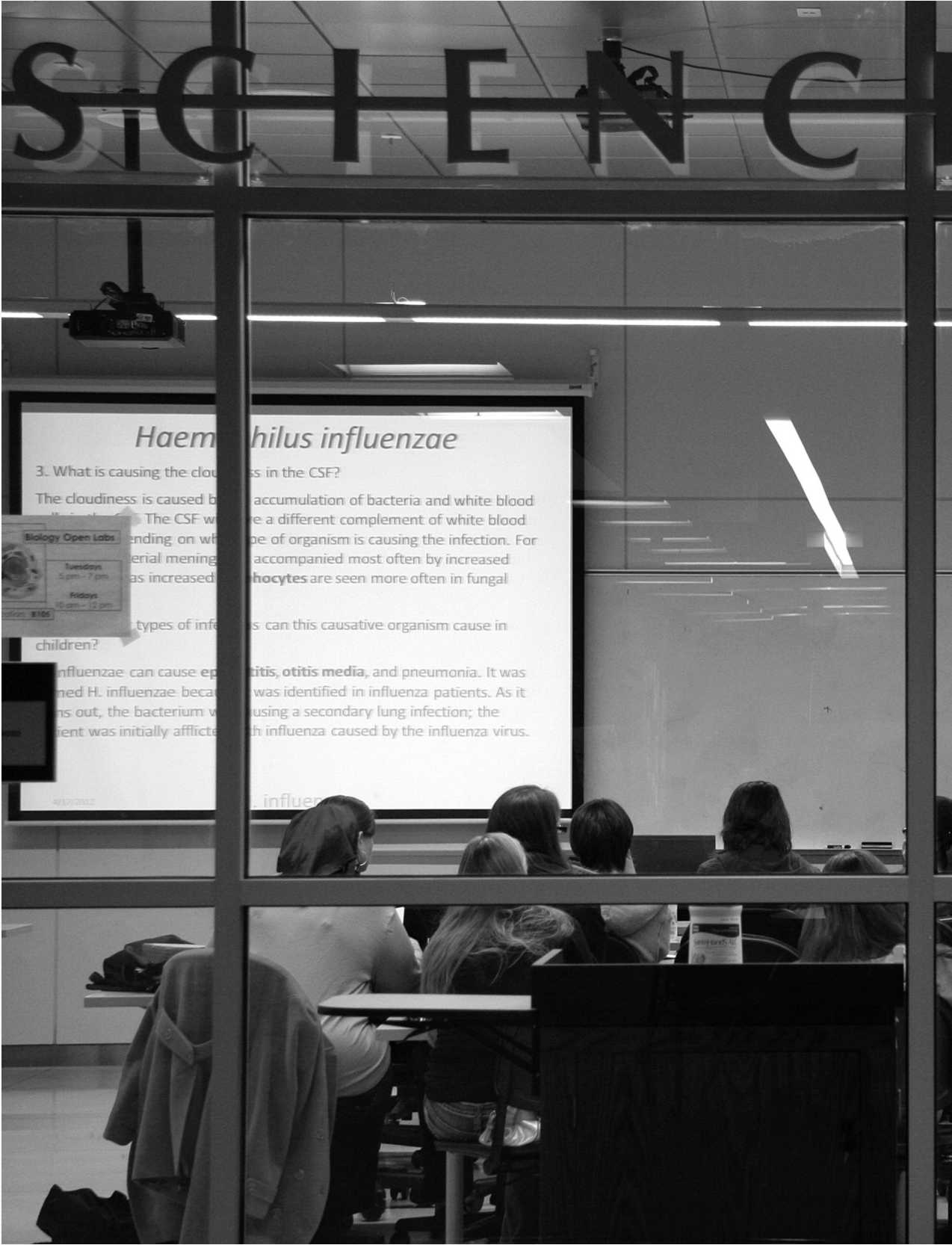


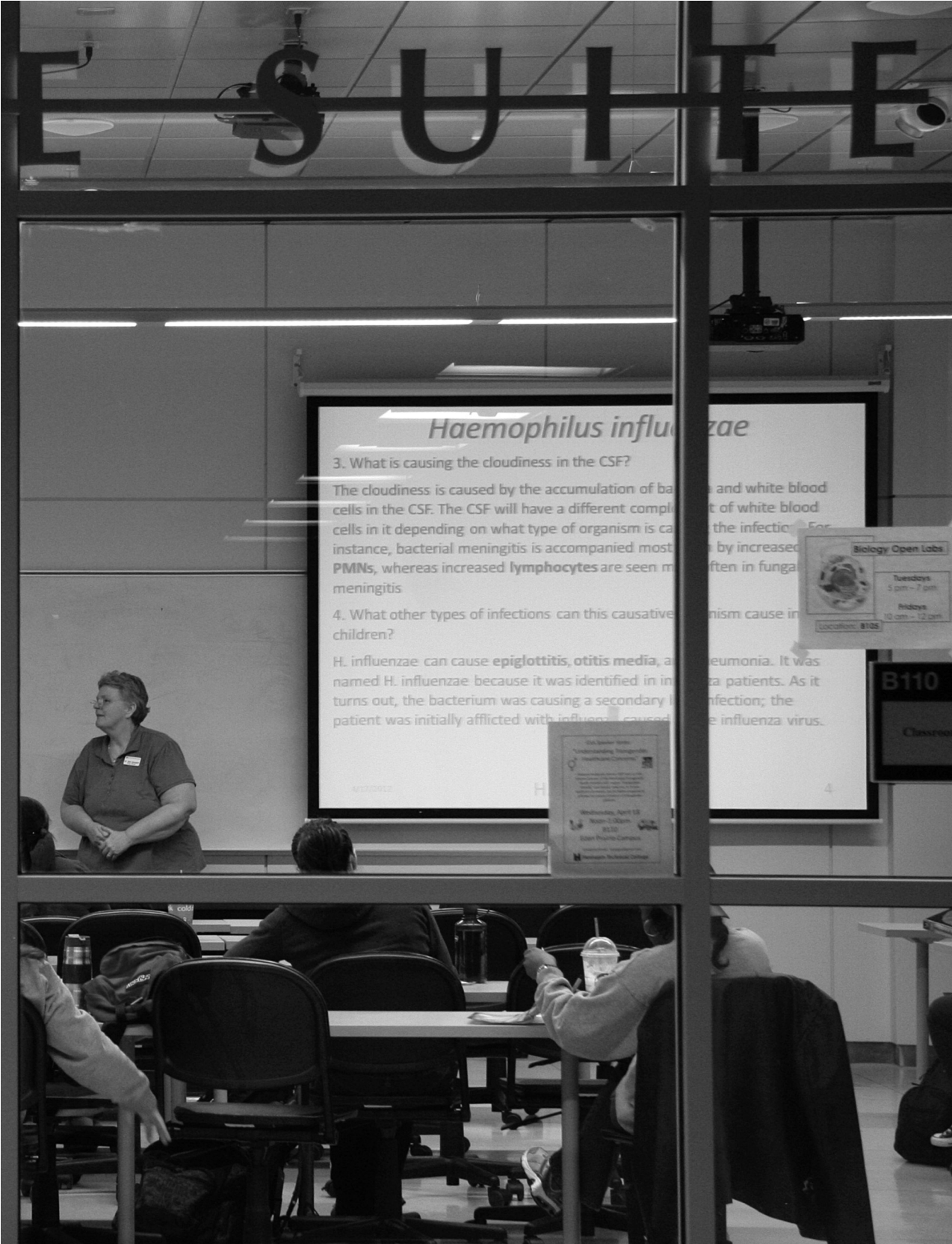


▲ The college vice president engages in one of many impromptu morning meetings with student services and other staff. In the background, the motivation for their work: a student seeks assistance at one of the college help desks.

(Next spread) Technology helps this biology instructor use a variety of media to reach students with different learning styles and preferences. ►

SPECIAL FOCUS: STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND THE COMMON GOOD





SPECIAL FOCUS: STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND THE COMMON GOOD



▲ Teamwork is key across all campus sectors. The college president gets critical information and advice from a member of his administrative staff.

This faculty member understands the importance of student engagement. During his morning ethics class, he challenges his students in a lively discussion on issues that are relevant to their everyday lives. ▼



TEACHING AND LEARNING: VISUALIZING OUR WORK



▲ A culinary arts faculty member talks to her students in preparation for catering the day's event: a benefit luncheon tea sponsored by the college's foundation office. Hands-on learning opportunities such as this are perfect preparation for the jobs these students will soon have.

Faculty/administration relations: Sometimes the most productive meetings take place over breakfast and coffee at the local diner. ▼



