

## The Erma Byrd Center Faculty Spotlight is on Bluefield State College's Al Martine, Adjunct Instructor of Communications

An Interview with Bluefield State College's  
Al Martine, Adjunct Instructor of Communications,  
by Lisa Moten, Erma Byrd Center Director

Lisa Moten: How long have you been teaching at the Erma Byrd Center?

*Al Martine: In 1995, I began teaching communications for Concord University at their former Beckley location on North Kanawha Street. When Concord University relocated to the Erma Byrd Center in 2007, I began teaching at this location. I now teach for Bluefield State College; and, am considered "shared faculty" because (not only do I teach for Bluefield State College) I teach for Concord University and New River Community & Technical College as well. And most recently, I am honored to become Vice-Chair of the New River Community & Technical College Board of Governors.*

David Ausubel:  
Meaningful Learning Theory



Lisa Moten: What do you enjoy most about teaching at the Erma Byrd Center?

*Al Martine: Once you get past the outstanding physical facilities here, it is working with the students that I enjoy! And, the advantage that I have in teaching communications is that when listening to the student speeches, I get to learn more about the students' personal lives and interest(s). Additionally, I am motivated (further) to teach by my family because I am married to a retired teacher (Gina Pedri Martine) and have two sons, Albert and Christian!*

Lisa Moten: Share your best teaching tip to keep students engaged in learning.

*Al Martine: One thing I consistently share with my students is that earning a good education will allow you to maintain the life you like and are currently living and/or allow you to improve your life's circumstances if you do not like the life you are currently living. In either scenario, education is the key! When educating students about the different types of speeches utilized in communications and, in turn, listening to them give those speeches, I learn more from the students than they learn from me. It is this type of two-way learning that occurs in my classes that keeps the students engaged. As educators, we must bring our professional and personal experiences (coupled with the learning theories) into the classroom setting to make learning more relevant. My varied professional background ranges from working for major metropolitan companies (such as Cox Cable New York & Baltimore), owning a major radio station, and leading as a high school principal for fourteen years in Fayette County, WV. And, it is through these professional experiences, that I am able to keep the students engaged by linking the learning theories to actual practice! Similarly speaking, I believe that it is important to also share my life's personal struggles and experiences because it helps my students to humanize me which further strengthens our instructor/student learning interactions. As a child raised in a number of foster homes (in both the New York and New Jersey), I quickly learned how to survive and how to take my life's circumstances (at that time) and turn them into something greater! It is important that we teach our youth to see beyond their circumstances! This important skill helped me to go places that I would not have been able to go otherwise (such as being a Retired US Major in the WVARNG, serving as Vice-Chair of the Raleigh County Housing Authority, serving as Regional Representative of the Beckley Appalachian Regional Hospital, and having served as Past-President of the Beckley Salvation Army Board to name a few). In summary, when teaching, one must have a willingness to share professional and personal experiences so that students connect new knowledge with what they already know which makes learning much more meaningful and relevant!*



Al Martine

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