

## **Integrating CIW into the Community College & One Women's Success**

By Sandy Cobb, MCIWD, CIW-CI

My name is Sandy Cobb, and I am a CIW-Certified Instructor with Mid-South Community College in West Memphis, AR. Which is about 8 miles from Memphis, TN. My College is now both a CIW Authorized Academic Partner and a CIW Faculty Training Institute. Following is the story of how we got here.

In January 2000, I left a position as a corporate trainer for a mid-sized financial firm to teach computer courses at this college. This was actually an unexpected change for me. Teaching college was never on my list of career goals. When the opportunity presented itself, I was intrigued. I had long suffered the disillusionment of having to always present training in the fast track arena, seldom seeing the results of my labor. The teacher in me wanted to teach "better" and "more". The President of the college Dr. Glen Fenter, and the Executive Vice President Dr. Barbara Baxter, gave me the challenge of coming up with a program of study that would be of true value to local industry. The phrase that stuck with me was "the more creative you are, the more we will like you". I was given a training budget and a six-month contract to work with. I was both impressed with this attitude of innovativeness and thrilled with the opportunity to finally be creative! In retrospect, being a Trainer for corporate is much like being put in a box and being told you can only do this within these constraints. The creative monster in me was dying to cut loose and this was my opportunity! The other side of the coin was that if I did not come up with something good, my contract might not be renewed. I accepted this challenge with great enthusiasm and set off to tread where no community college had ever tread before. You will see what I mean as you read on.

I had taken the some of the CIW courses a year before at the local New Horizons. I had been doing Web Site design for about 2 years. I was impressed with the CIW program as a whole, and felt it would be a good program to teach at the community college level. My impression of fast track was that it was fine for self motivated professional who already had some background. Others would be lost in the sea of information dumped on them way too fast to retain. Some people are naturally good test takers. These individuals may manage to pass certification exams without having the hands on experience. I know this because I have seen it. I have know Fast Track Students who have passed 3 certification exams (CIW Foundations, CIW Site Designer and CIW E-Commerce) and still had never placed a web page up on a web server. I believe that Fast Track training does have its place, and I take all Fast Track classes myself. This works for me because I am a very motivated learner and already have some IT background. I also believe that it is not for everyone. A typical student with no IT background will need much more time for hands on learning. Thus my plan to bring CIW curriculum into the Community College was born. Following is the breakdown of how I accomplished my goal.

First I scheduled the CIW classes that I needed to complete my Master CIW Site Designer track. Next, I took and passed the certification exams. Then, I contacted Prosoft Training ([www.prosofttraining.com](http://www.prosofttraining.com)) to find out what we needed to do to become a CIW Authorized Training Provider. I submitted my application to become an CIW Certified Instructor and completed the application for the college to become an ATP (Authorized Training Provider). At that time, no other college was offering CIW, so we were treated just like any fast track ATP. This included paying \$5,000.00 for the first year, and agreeing to pay \$3,000.00 each year thereafter. (Fortunately, Prosoft has since recognized the value of offering CIW courses in the community college and has eliminated the annual fee.)

### Certificate of Proficiency

With all of this groundwork in place, I began working on the curriculum, using CIW courseware exclusively. Since fast track training has no method of assessment built in, I needed to work on a

course design that would both break down learning units, and assess students along the way I broke down the CIW Foundations Track into 3 college courses: HTML, Internet Business Fundamentals, and Networking Fundamentals. I worked on one course at a time, ultimately creating the course design and syllabi for each. Upon completion of each course design, I submitted a course proposal to our curriculum approval committee. Some of the courses already existed in our catalog, so my proposal was for a re-designed replacement of the existing course. For instance, we already had an HTML course, as well an Introduction to the Internet course. My proposal kept the existing Course ID, but the description and content changed to comply with CIW. Thus the CIW Foundations Track, began: HTML, Networking Fundamentals, Internet Business Fundamentals and CIW Site Design. Once these four courses were approved, I submitted another proposal to implement a 15 credit Certificate of Proficiency in Web Site Design. The CP included the above four courses. My proposal was approved and we began offering this CP program in the Fall of 2000.

### AAS Degree

By the Spring semester of 2001, I CIW became a concentration for the AAS degree in Information Technology.

The beauty of this program is that students can be earning certifications as they go. They can be Master Certified Internet Webmaster Designers before they even graduate, if going for the AAS degree. We have found that most of our CP only students keep on taking classes beyond the CP. They almost all go on and take E-Commerce and JavaScript, even though they are not seeking a degree. We have interlaced some graphic electives such as Macromedia Flash, Macromedia Fireworks, Adobe PhotoShop, and Adobe Illustrator. These courses are attractive to our serious CIW students and they are filling up even though they are not currently part of a degree or CP program. We have found that our students come from all walks of life. Some are very young and typical college students, while some are adult learners that may already have a career or are looking for a career change. Generally, all the students are enjoying the classes and are very enthusiastic.

The key that makes this program successful is the additional time allotted for hands on learning. There are projects required for every class. With this semester, Spring 2002, I have implemented a project called "Create Your E-Portfolio". Students will build a Web site for their E-Portfolio to showcase their projects, resumes, transcripts and other samples of work done. This idea was spanned by the fact that one of our Department advisors is an IT recruiter. She shared with us at our last meeting, that our CIW students were scoring higher than average on the standard HTML and JavaScript tests she administers to all job applicants, but the fact that they had no portfolio to show was hindering their chances of gaining employment. From this semester on, all CIW Students will have an electronic portfolio to showcase their skills, thus enhancing employability.

### Fast Track:

There are still those folks that want what they want and they want it fast. To accommodate this group, we do offer CIW Fast Track in our Continuing Education / Business and Industry World. We give these Fast Track students equal access to the Blackboard course sites that traditional students have access to, including a site with CIW practice test that I have written. Offering fast track classes also is an extra income opportunity for CIW Certified Instructors. At our school, the instructor earns 50% of the profit. This is a nice incentive.

### Staffing Needs

When we started out, I was the only CIW Certified Instructor. We now have 6, including 2 fulltime instructors and 4 adjunct instructors. I have handpicked each one, and 4 of them are former students of mine. My plan from the beginning was to "Grow our own" and that is just what we

have done. A CIW student who has graduated and passed the CIW certification exams is a prime candidate to recruit for adjunct CIW-CI. The way I have been prepping them is as follows. Have the student/graduate teach some computer class for 1 or 2 semesters to gain the needed experience teaching technical courses. Then help them through the process of applying for CIW-CI certification. While it is true that adjuncts don't get paid much, this is fun stuff! It's a great way to keep skills sharp and there are many who will jump at this opportunity.

We continue to evolve as we go, enhancing our program in any way we find helpful. Needless to say, my contract at Mid-South Community College has continued to be renewed, and I get the impression that our administration is pleased with the result of my creative ventures into the CIW world! If you would like more detailed information on CIW at Mid-South Community College, please visit: [www.midsouthcc.edu/ciw.htm](http://www.midsouthcc.edu/ciw.htm) .

#### Other Success

Now with this story told, you may be thinking, "Well, I bet she was making more money in the corporate world!" Well, you are right and wrong. While pondering the decision to leave my cushy corporate job to teach in a Community College, one of the very big considerations was the fact that I would no longer be getting bonus checks twice per year. What I did to supplement that income was open my own Web Site Design business. Fate was on my side. In December of 1999, I place an ad on the Internet at an independent contractor Web site. By January 2000 I had my very first private Web client, Teran Realty of Woodstock, New York. ([www.teranrealty.com](http://www.teranrealty.com)). I never advertised again, but my private client portfolio has grown steadily and I have just about all the "side work" I can handle. My business name is Sandra Cobb Enterprises and I work out of my home office. I work my 40 hours in 4 days at the college, freeing me up Fridays and weekends to concentrate on my own business. My only overhead is the cost of hosting my own Web site, [www.cobbwebdesign.com](http://www.cobbwebdesign.com) . You may see my portfolio by visiting [www.cobbwebdesign.com/resume.htm](http://www.cobbwebdesign.com/resume.htm) . In addition, I have been making some "extra" money by selling CIW practice tests as a test author for Boson Software ([http://www.boson.com/tests/pro\\_soft.htm](http://www.boson.com/tests/pro_soft.htm)). In a nutshell, with all things combined, I am making more money, not less. I have found that professional certifications open up all kinds of doors!

#### Rewards

Overall my life has changed dramatically as a result of pursuing professional certifications and taking some risks. I spend my days doing what I love and reaping untold rewards for my efforts. By rewards I do not just mean financial. I love to teach and when students learn, I am rewarded. I love to create and make things happen. My freedom to do this at the college and in my business as a Web Site Designer is very fulfilling. In November 2001 I was asked to co-present at a national conference for Community Colleges, Innovations 2001, with Jerry Baird, CEO of Prosoft Training and Neal Evans of NWCET. The topic was "Bring CIW into the Community College". In January 2002 I was asked by Prosoft Training if our college would be willing to become one of the first Faculty Training Institutes, to train instructors from other colleges to teach CIW. In February 2002 I was asked by Prosoft Training to co-author a book for Community Colleges, detailing how to integrate the CIW program. These have all been rewards to me.

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