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JEAN BRIERLEY AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING

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THE PROFESSOR struggles to maneuver her fingers with precision on a delicate box of hollow wood, trying to achieve the right curve of her hands, the exact pressure of her fingertips. Carole Barnett is learning to play the classical guitar. And it's hard. Which is good.

Barnett believes in challenge. She's convinced there's value in the expert teacher becoming a student again. "Because when I'm in the classroom," says the associate professor of management, "I'll make a better connection with students who are struggling to understand what they hear me say."

For Barnett, teaching is a calling, something she believes she was always meant to do. She considers herself successful only if students in her classes undergo a personal awakening. "They must gain the consciousness that they have a gift," says Barnett, "as well as a moral responsibility to develop and use that gift for the bettering of the human condition."

To develop this talent, Barnett, whose training is in organizational psychology, devotes more hours to designing her classes than she does to actually teaching them. Usually, her students submit résumés and take a set of

personality tests. And then Barnett enters all the information into a spreadsheet to form the learning teams. She obsesses over it. Who would benefit from the experience of being a leader? Who needs the challenge of learning to work as a follower? What personality types would thrive from working together? "I aim to enable them to see for themselves who they are," she says, "through their own practice and behavior in their groups." Barnett also spends hours in her study creating multimedia presentations that have become valuable teaching tools. After ValuJet Airlines flight 592 crashed into the Florida Everglades in 1996, for example, Barnett assembled dozens of news clips into an integrated video presentation that delivers an unforgettable lesson in corporate accountability. Students watch as government officials and business leaders try to answer tough questions—about blame and what it really means when 4,000 human beings lose their jobs. The video ends with the Everglades funeral ceremony, where row after row after row of empty caskets are surrounded by devastated family members.

Depending on the course, Barnett's students learn why businesses fail and how people and organizations do or don't coop-

erate successfully. Learners analyze existing companies and study the qualities of effective leaders. But in the end, no matter what the class, the students themselves are the main subject. "Her course showed me how to think and how to learn," wrote one student in a recent evaluation, "and I know that I will use that forever. She opened my eyes to many things that are going on in the real world and showed me that I can make a difference."

Most students emerge from a semester with Barnett convinced that they have an important destiny. They are changed, in part, because their teacher is eager to be challenged and changed. Barnett turns to Rumi, the great 13th-century Persian poet, teacher, and theologian, to describe the process of struggle and growth that inspires her approach: "Very little grows on jagged rock/Be ground/Be crumbled/So wildflowers will come up where you are...."\* And she has learned from her own experience that broken ground can be good ground, rich with possibilities. It is the ground in which great teaching—and great learning—flower.

—Suki Casanave

\*Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi, 1207-1273