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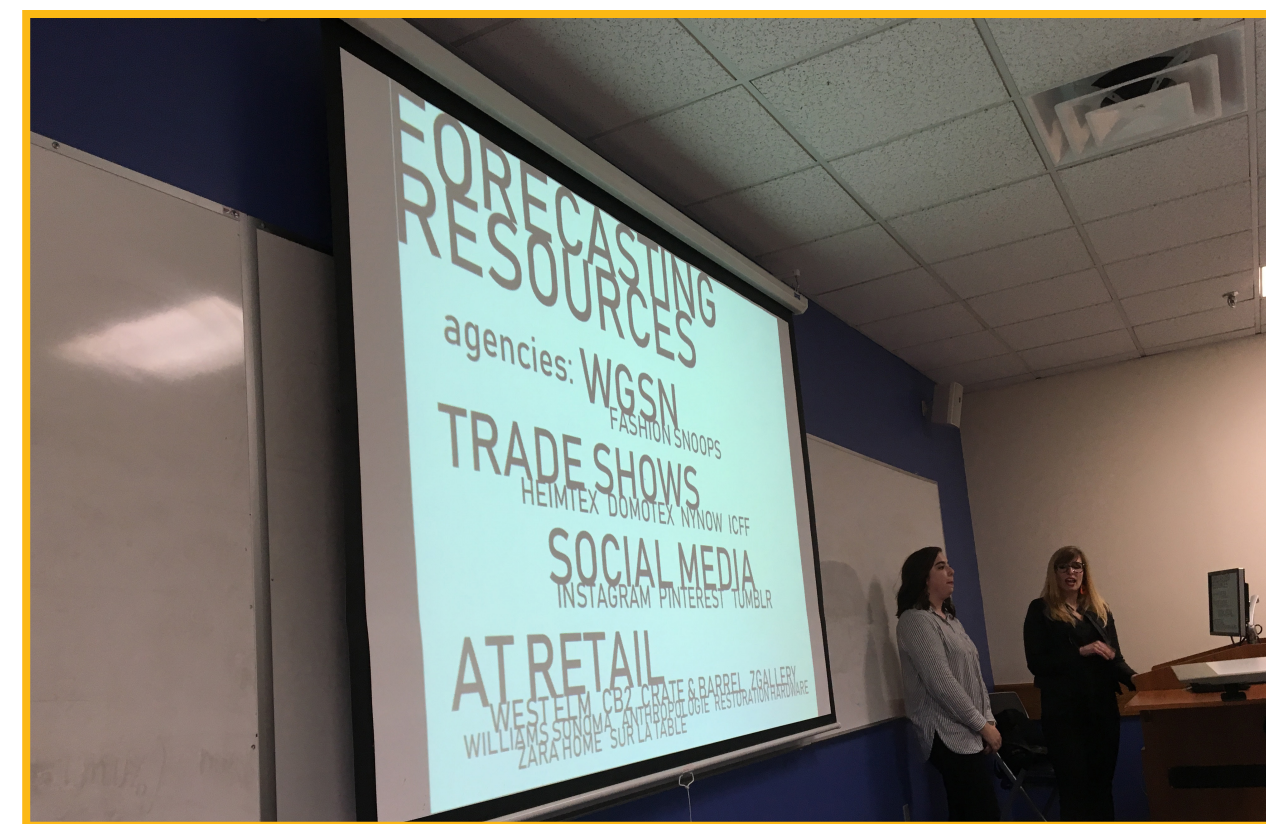


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discovery:

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF INDUSTRY GUEST SPEAKERS



DESCRIPTION OF SCHOLARLY INQUIRY

There is a strong belief among educators that guest speakers are a valuable addition to a course curriculum, but the academic literature is often based upon anecdotal evidence or simply assumes that speakers are efficacious.

However, no academic research has been found that addresses the impact of a fashion professional speaking during one class session of a course and what value students find in this kind of experience.

This study will help to fill that void and will offer guidance to educators who seek to incorporate guest speakers into the college classroom.

The overarching research question of this study was "What value do students get from guest speakers?"

To best answer that question, a qualitative research method was devised. Students enrolled in fashion courses taught by the researchers were asked to complete a survey with open-ended questions about students' prior experiences with and expectations of guest speakers.

The survey was administered via the Qualtrics online survey tool. As a qualitative study, data were coded and evaluated for emergent themes. The researchers coded independently, with an inter-coder reliability rate of 89%. Discrepancies were discussed and resolved until agreement was reached.

OUTCOME

A total of 114 students participated in the survey, 55 enrolled JWU and 59 at Iowa State University. Most students who had experienced one or more industry guests speaking in their college classes felt positively about the occurrence (86.1% overall). Only 8% noted that they neither liked nor disliked the practice, and only one respondent disliked the practice.

Students looked to industry guest speakers for: their expertise and up-to-date, insider knowledge; personal stories and day-to-day experiences as professionals in the field; and specific career paths taken since graduating college.

Students noted that guest speakers provided: new or alternate perspectives; connections between what was learned in the college curriculum and actual careers; and a supplement to the instructor and textbook.



Research inviting industry practitioners to speak in classrooms is frequently anecdotal. The purpose of this study was to explore student views on the value of guest speakers in the classroom. Students surveyed typically saw industry guests as useful, especially when a speaker's personal experiences and career choices were relevant to a student's own desired future. In addition, beyond hearing from a knowledgeable professional currently working in the industry, students hoped for a very personalized experience, with individualized career advice and time to ask questions. Students also appreciated speakers who were well-organized, persuasive, and included visuals.

SIGNIFICANCE OF OUTCOME

Students had many expectations of industry guest speakers. An ideal guest would be: a knowledgeable professional currently working in the industry, a polished speaker, well-organized, honest, engaging, friendly, passionate, and persuasive. An ideal visit would focus directly on the particular topic the class was studying or the student's primary area of focus and would include ample Q&A time and visuals. An additional finding was that respondents were excited and thankful that they were being surveyed about this aspect of their college lives.

Based on the results of this study, to improve student experiences and engagement with industry guest speakers, educators might consider the following recommendations when selecting and preparing for a guest speaker:

1. Ask students what they expect of/would like to see from a guest speaker
2. Choose a professional currently working in a career position related to course content
3. Prepare guests to:
 - a. Speak about –
 - A typical day
 - Personal stories
 - Career path
 - Career pitfalls
 - Their own college experience and how it relates to their current position
 - b. Answer questions
 - c. Speak enthusiastically and honestly
 - d. Bring visual aids
4. After the presentation, explicitly link speaker topics to class content

