

[ THE LAST WORD: TC STUDENT VOICES ]

## You Must Be Mistaken



**T**HE JAZZ DRUMMER E.W. Wainwright said that “a mistake is the most beautiful thing in the world... [It’s] the only way you can get to a place you’ve never been before.” Yet mistakes are often tied to narratives of pain and loss rather than understood as sources of inspiration and opportunities for innovation.

Learning from our mistakes takes courage. If, like me, you were taught to strive for perfection, you may know the debilitating fear of going against the status quo. Typically, young children don’t have that fear,

which is why they excel creatively and constructively. Consider the marshmallow challenge, in which, using string, marshmallows and uncooked spaghetti, children and adults compete against one another in small teams to build the highest tower in a short period of time. In a head-to-head challenge, children will typically win, because the adults — for all their experience and learning — seem inhibited from making quick decisions under pressure due to the fear of failure.

Striving for perfection prevents sustainable success because it dis-

courages mistake-based learning and, ultimately, innovation. After all, when you’ve attained “perfection,” why risk aspiring to anything else?

Teachers College’s faculty have always understood the importance of purposeful trial-and-error learning. John Dewey championed hands-on inquiry to make sense of one’s environment. Edward Lee Thorndike’s Law of Effect holds that we try and discard different options until we find one that produces a satisfactory result. Even Maxine Greene described her-

### SECOND THOUGHTS

Teachers College faculty, from John Dewey to Maxine Greene, have understood the importance of “purposeful, trial-and-error learning.”

— Chloe Dawson

self in terms of “what I am not yet,” reinforcing the constant unfinished human state of being and its vast possibilities.

As TC students, then, we should commit to achieving mistakes rather than simply making them. We should

revere mistakes rather than fear them. We should take advantage of TC as a holistic organizational space where mistakes provide opportunities for innovation. Above all, we should be grateful for the chances we’ve inherited as TC students to challenge and reinvent the status quo.

— CHLOE DAWSON



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[ CLASS ACTS ]

## The Arts Are Her Lens

For **Deirdre Hollman**, the arts integrate all disciplines and her own “many lives”

A budding high school scientist, Deirdre Hollman discovered art history at Princeton. In New York, she worked with film and video director Millicent Shelton and hip-hop artist Hurby “Luv Bug” Azor; wrote and produced plays; and taught youngsters acting by situating fairy tales in the South Bronx. ■ Meanwhile, directing education at New York’s Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Hollman co-founded the Annual Black Comic Book Festival and used comics to teach kids *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*: “This isn’t just superhero stuff. It’s about finer, more relatable stories of social justice.” ■ Hollman’s own heroes include former Schomburg director Khalil Gibran Muhammad (her historical literacy focus reflects his influence) and TC’s Maxine Greene: “She believed through culture and art we begin to understand each other and participate in democracy.” — **RICHARD HUTZLER**



THE FUTURE of Our Fields

Spotlighting students who will extend TC's legacy

PHOTOGRAPH: KARSTEN MORAN