

*A presentation for
CIPs weekend
Ferris State University
DCCL Program*

The Journey Begins with “Why?”

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While my artifact is rather unconventional, I thought I would embrace both the theme of this weekend and my creative side.

After hearing Shugart’s interview at the end of our last course, I was inspired to go and re-read portions of his book "Leadership in the Crucible of Work." As it turns out, we share a strong commitment to community colleges, and a deep relationship with the creative arts.

Revisiting Shugart, the crucible, art & fear...

Connecting Art
and Leadership



He referred to the book "Art & Fear" where the authors say that "making art precipitates self-doubt, stirring deep waters that lay between what you know you should be, and what you fear you might be." The parallels between art and leadership seemed clear to me.

But Shugart reminds us of the importance of telling a story.



‘Why?’ is as important as ‘What?’ and, ‘How?’
The story and its sense-making are shared by all.

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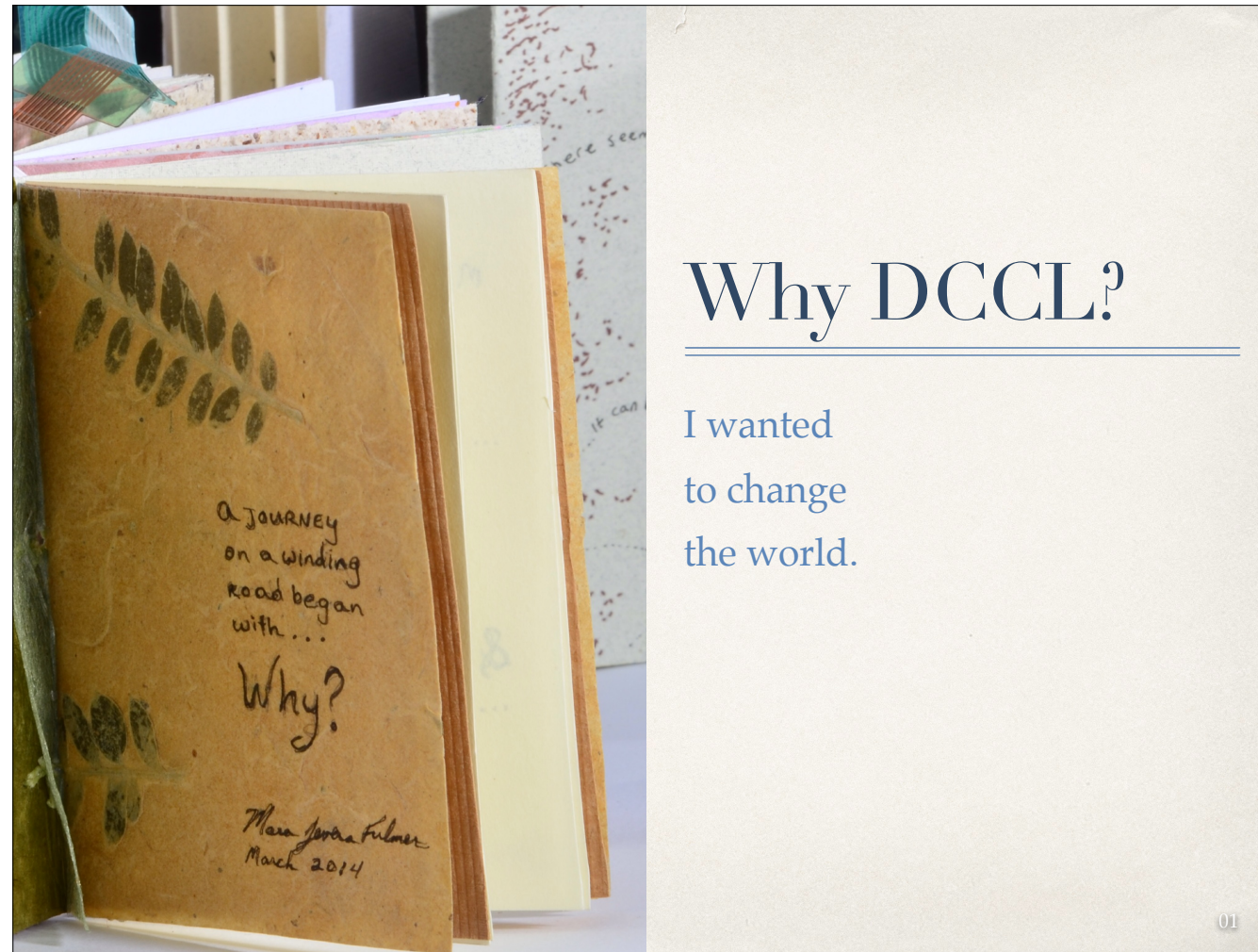
“This gift (of story) takes the question, ‘Why?’ as seriously as it does, ‘What?’ and, ‘How?’ And the gift of story is that it entrusts that sense-making conversation to everyone.”

He says that “integrity (is) a source of hope”...

Integrity,
hope...
require
purpose.



True integrity, he says, "...arises from serious reflection, real knowledge of our own emerging story, as individuals, and as a community of work." But, he says, "hope requires purpose." I think that you will agree that these elements – sense-making, integrity, hope, and purpose – have been reflected in our journey together these past three years.



Looking back, I came into this program skeptical. It even led me to write a letter to myself which I called “Why would I want to pursue a Doctorate in Community College Leadership?”

What I did know was that I wanted to make a difference, to “change the world.” I wrote back then that, while Art faculty are not traditionally seen as being on the leadership track, I found in myself an intense – dare I say sometimes impatient – ...

Bridging
knowledge gaps
between
perceptions
and reality...



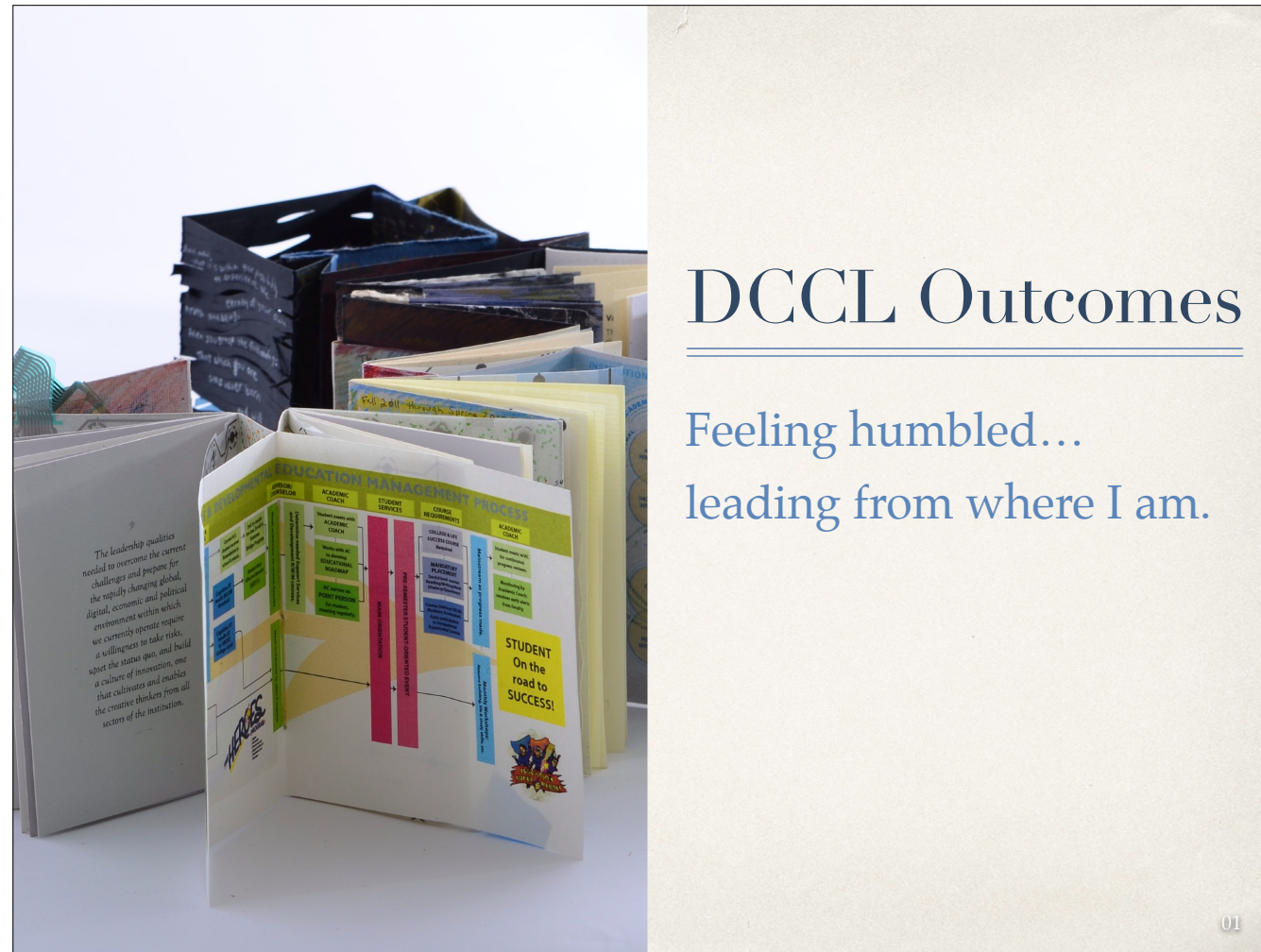
...drive to bridge that knowledge and communication gap, where I lacked any real understanding of leading complex organizations.

But in answering my own question of "Why?", I wrote: "My ideal career path would allow me to address both the perceptions of community college education while also improving the reality of it..."



Today, I am more committed to this than ever.

The conceptual book you see in these photos captures the metaphorical journey of the last three years. Titled "A Journey on a Winding Road Begins with 'Why?'" , it unfolds to reveal two parallel journeys, one professional, and one personal. At one point there is an overlapping of the two sides during the toughest times, as you can imagine.



DCCL Outcomes

Feeling humbled...
leading from where I am.

As for the DCCL Outcomes, how do we address these without having truly experienced a change in our job positions? Many of us are already there and can speak to these more authentically. I, however, still feel very humbled in my faculty and coordinating position. Even as I try to "lead from where I am."

Yet, if we are to agree that one of the primary missions of the community college is to help students who...



Advocate and advance the community college mission

Embracing the tools to stand up.

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...might not otherwise have seen in themselves the potential to achieve college success – yet nonetheless they try – then I am an unwavering advocate. From the perspective of an artist-trained leader, this program has given me the tools, the fortification to stand up to naysayers and, without apology, emphatically state that the community college mission is not only valuable and worthy, it is essential to the future of our communities, our state, and even our nation.



Develop as a person, scholar, and community college leader

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"Thank your family always."

That was my 4th piece of "advice for success" that was published on the DCCL website. My husband died just 8 days later. I had made two promises to him: to finish this doctorate, and not sell property we had bought, instead finishing it into the studios and gallery that was the family dream.



It has been very hard. And I made some mistakes.

I even had to redefine who I was for myself and to my children.

Then there was this doctorate. As I slowly made my way back into work, I found a large group of people who believed in me.



And they were there to support me on this journey of continued growth. I found that the same held true for the DCCL staff and cohort.

It was not been an easy path. I don't think it was for any of us in this cohort. I'm sure that most (if not all) of us faced challenges that could have derailed us at any time.



Yet we have succeeded in reaching this point, we have met the challenge to go forward and make meaning from all that we have learned.

If you believe in the power of dreams then you will appreciate that it is those dreams that haunt you at the moment between wakefulness and deep sleep that seem to have the power to move mountains.



... Being aware of the power of dreams, I realized that I must remain true to my goals, and do it well. But I also needed to give myself permission to ask for help, to state boundaries where needed, and forgive myself when something didn't go right.

After reflecting on all that we have researched and written, and all that has been,...

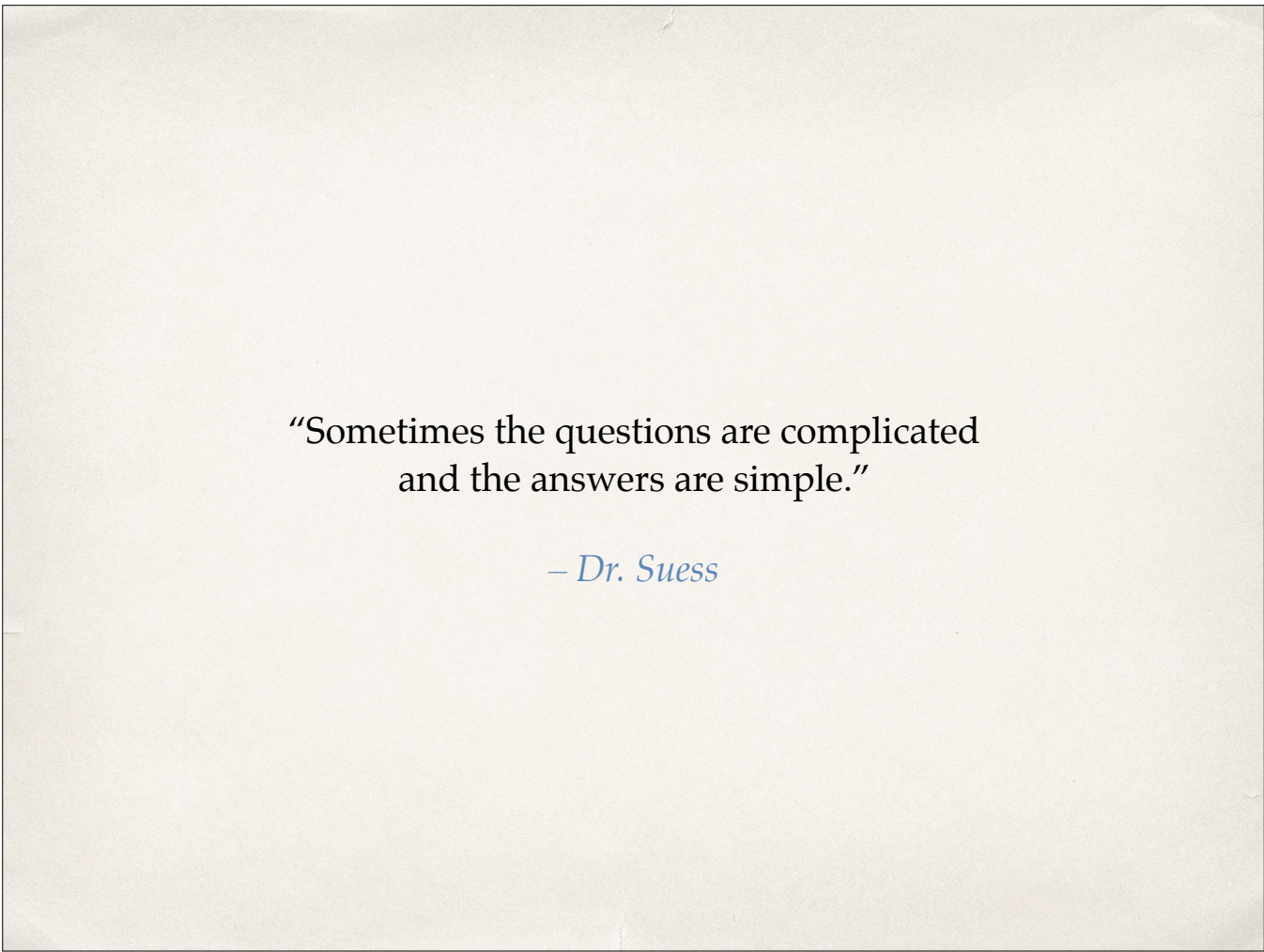


The Strength to Make a Difference

Sharing in the dreams of our students.

...I have been able to reconnect with "Why?" I came to the DCCL program and especially why I continued. For me, I have learned that there are many layers and interwoven threads to the tapestry of work we do at community colleges.

And I realize that I have the desire, strength, knowledge and tools now to make a difference. And with this comes an almost spiritual commitment which drives me forward today.



“Sometimes the questions are complicated
and the answers are simple.”

– *Dr. Suess*

As one of my other favorite and very wise authors said:

“Sometimes the questions are complicated
and the answers are simple.” (Dr. Suess, aka Theodore Gisel)

For me the answer is... go forward and lead from where I land.