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CHRISTOPHER DAVIS: So this is the *Career and Academic Resource Center Podcast*. And my name is Christopher Davis. And I'm the associate director of the current Academic Resource Center here at Harvard Extension School. And I am thrilled to have with me today Dr. Carmine Gibaldi.

Dr. Gibaldi, I'm going to ask you to tell us a little bit about your teaching background. You are a veteran instructor, not only at Harvard Extension, but you are a professor of Management and Organizational Psychology at St. John's University. Is that correct?

CARMINE GIBALDI: Yes, and at St. John's University, as I usually introduce it sort of my home base. That's where I'm a tenured full professor, teach management, entrepreneurship, organizational behavior, and psychology. I also teach at Columbia University where, as of late, each fall, I've been teaching a graduate course in social entrepreneurship-- a course that I introduced myself has been doing quite well.

I was thinking about it before we were coming on air probably about 20, 21 years at HES. So I've seen a lot of changes at HES, growth at HES, infusion of technology at HES. And I've been happy to be kind of a part of all of it.

CHRISTOPHER DAVIS: And you won a teaching award, I believe, in 2013. Is that--

CARMINE GIBALDI: Yes, yep. Yes, I was very honored to receive that teaching award. And I attended the commencement exercise and was actually beyond honored. I was really personally touched. I mean, I do this and feel like a lucky person to be able to do this.

So to have any level of recognition kind of caught me by surprise in a way because I feel-- as I've said, I think even in class, I'm kind of a lucky guy. I'm doing something I love, I like. I get to meet people.

CHRISTOPHER DAVIS: And you touch on something, which makes sense to elaborate for listeners. So I was a student in your class two years ago-- Organizational Behavior. That's one of the courses that you teach at Extension School. It's also one of the foundational courses of our Masters in Management and Finance Programs. How long have you been teaching OB at Extension School?

CARMINE As I said, probably the entire amount of time I've been at. That was the call that I received. I
GIBALDI: had submitted my resume after attending program at Harvard's School of Education and became aware of HES when I was up in Cambridge. And the rest is history, as they say.

CHRISTOPHER Hm. So right, at that time, it was an in-person course. You would come up from New York
DAVIS: every Tuesday to teach that course.

CARMINE Yes, I would actually fly out, come into Cambridge, spend the day there, do work in terms of
GIBALDI: preparation. And I teach my course and then jump on a plane right after class and head back to New York.

CHRISTOPHER And so when did it become an online course?
DAVIS:

CARMINE Probably about six or so years ago. And, as I mentioned before, I was a bit apprehensive. I
GIBALDI: was a bit concerned as to how it might all kind of feel, because for me, it's really sort of connecting with. It's developing relationships with people.

It's allowing people to kind of be free to participate and be part of the learning community as we develop it. And I wasn't quite sure how the technology was going to work within that kind of facility and that kind of approach to teaching and working together.

CHRISTOPHER From the outset, was it the online, the live web conference that it is today?
DAVIS:

CARMINE Yes, yeah, yeah. We used to use Collaborate. And then we switched over to Zoom. Yeah, all
GIBALDI: that worked out very well. And then there's the hybrid implication, which--

CHRISTOPHER The on-campus weekend.
DAVIS:

CARMINE The on-campus weekend, which I truly love, because after building a relationship with people
GIBALDI: kind of online, to walk in the room and really feel the energy of the people and that learning community, it's usually about 35 to 40 folks is just incredible.

And most people are pretty revved up already kind of coming in if I could use that expression. People are very excited to sort of be there, see each other live in person. I think it really kind of

brings the group together who coalesces a group. I think that's part of what helps the learning community kind of continue beyond our finite time together.

And that I'm in a way truly amazed by it, I must say, and even touched in a certain way by that there are these clusters of people out there still kind of talking based upon what came out of our discussions. I just think that's an incredible testament in a way to the type of student that comes through HES.

CHRISTOPHER DAVIS: What I love about your teaching style is you do something very difficult to do, which is I think you guide the class with a light touch. Like an orchestra conductor, you're not holding people's hands. You kind of set the stage for the discussion.

And you let student participation drive a lot of the conversations. You gently steer things back on course if they ever get off course. Has your teaching style changed at all from how you would teach in a classroom?

CARMINE GIBALDI: I think from a teaching standpoint, I was sort of surprised in a way to realize that for me, teaching in the live web conference takes more energy, not less. The level of sort of concentration, the level of being able to kind of, as you said, gently guide 40 people through a discussion means for me from a teaching perspective that I really need to truly be listening to every word that every person is saying and trying to put things together so that, as you said, we kind of come back. We make sure we're on course. We kind of get to where we need to get to.

I also try and manage the written chat a little bit. I sort of see what people are typing in so I could tie it in at times or when possible. So from that perspective, as a teaching, as I said sort of implication, I'm much more-- believe it or not-- I felt more physically drained at the end of a live web conference class than being in the room with a group of folks for two, three hours.

What teaching the live web conference class also did was remind me to sort of dig into my own tool box-- an expression that I use in class-- to think about the adult learners that I'm working with much more so than even when I'm in a room with people, because, somehow, it seems easier when you're in a room for me to kind manage all of that.

But from afar from this sort of place that I sit and thinking about all these folks that are sitting in very different locations, I can see people in their workplaces. People are lying in bed at home. People are sitting in their living rooms. People are at Starbucks and elsewhere.

And even that sort of takes a certain amount of energy to constantly pull people in. And it reminds me, hey, these are folks from 22 to 82 that are anywhere in the world. And it's on me to keep them engaged, keep them involved, and keep them present and on that sort of classroom, as we call it.

That was a long winded answer. But I guess it has affected how I teach, because I feel like I do end up paying a lot more attention to who is she? Who is he? Where are they? What is their position? What appears to be even their age category, other kinds of things like that?

CHRISTOPHER

So I'd like to ask you in a bit about something that you referenced, which is obviously an important part of what we do and who we are which is the adult learner piece. But before we get to that, I just wanted to ask you to elaborate a little bit on-- as an instructor, what is your ideal level of participation in a live web conference?

DAVIS:

I know that there are students who register for a live web conference for the first time. And they're not quite sure what to expect. I think some students feel, do I need to raise my hand for every question-- a student who might otherwise get their cue for when they feel comfortable to raise their hand in a physical space?

I sometimes find that a little hard to gauge in a web conference, especially the first time. So from the faculty perspective, tell me a little bit about what you like to see in student participation.

CARMINE

I do encourage and put a value on literally participating in the class. I let people know upfront. I do want to know that people are engaged. I do want to know that people are kind of there, not just physically present, but are processing the readings, the cases, what we're talking about, what other students are mentioning, and so on, and really kind of trying to make sense of it.

GIBALDI:

So I do look for verbal participation. As you already know, I don't pose necessarily very specific questions. But I keep the questions kind of broader and let the 35, 40 people-- that's part of the conducting piece-- let them sort of improvise in a way and discuss as I pose the broader question.

But I do look for and do hope that, I mean, ideally, that a student would make, at least, a good verbal comment or two during the class discussion, as well as the case discussion. So even combined two comments during a class, then I know that he/she is involved, is following, has thought about it, and is participating.

But I do look for people to be present, given that we're studying OB, which happens to do with people in the workplace. And the vast majority of folks are in or have been in some workplace. There's a lot to sort of drop on.

CHRISTOPHER DAVIS: So you referenced this a little bit earlier. I can certainly speak to the student perspective side of this. But as a faculty member, what to you is the highlight of the on-campus weekend?

CARMINE GIBALDI: Literally being in the room with people, as I said, the highlight becomes I do feel the energy more. And I do feel that there is a-- I hate to use the word, performance. But there is a sort of sense of when you're physically there versus the web conference, even though I get it in the web conference, it's much more present.

And I feel like sometimes if I were to visualize it, I feel like students are almost sitting in their seats vibrating, literally, [LAUGHS] the energy that I can kind of see and feel. Once we get started, it just starts to happen. I'm always sad. I have to share with you on that Sunday is a real kind of almost withdrawal.

And sometimes I just roam around and walk around a little bit in the square, then jump on tea and walk around a bit more just to sort of decompress and process and just feel like so much has occurred, so much has happened.

CHRISTOPHER DAVIS: Yeah. It's kind of a very similar feeling for students too. It's the first time you were in the room with these people but with instructor and with your fellow classmates. But you've developed a relationship with them. Depending on what point in the semester it's coming, it could be several weeks. It could be more than that.

There's very much a sense of anticipation. You want to meet the instructor. You want to meet your fellow classmates. You know who they are. You've seen them on camera.

CARMINE GIBALDI: There is this sense of it. And I talk about it just like when we manage people, as I talk about. I feel like, teaching, it's relationships. It's about building relationships. It's about building connectivity. It's about sort of making those connections with people and trying to go right out of the gate when we start teaching.

That's why I ask for information even before we start the semester and just so I can sort of get a little insight as to who is in the class-- what they do-- what part of the world they from-- those kinds of things, which also allow me to sort of draw upon that when I'm teaching.

It also allows me to kind of draw upon that to even mention in class a certain specific reference points to a student, right. Knowing a student is in Florida, I can just bring up, how's the weather in Florida, which seems like a ridiculous point. But it brings us a little bit closer together, because the student remembers, oh, well, he knows I'm in Florida, or she knows him.

And so I think all of that serves to help create greater cohesion, build a relationship, and so on. And as you already know for me, the relationship that never ends.

CHRISTOPHER

You are a published author, a published writer. And also your St. John's University Faculty page lists some of the presentations that you've done or given over the past several years. And you gave a presentation on working with adult learners and using transformational learning.

DAVIS:

One of the things that you alluded to earlier-- and a lot of courses at the Extension School you'll see a wide variety of ages and backgrounds and levels of experience. Can you speak a little bit about your experience with adult learners and what your thoughts are?

CARMINE

The population at Harvard Extension is for me kind of a wonderful example of how adult learners work so well together and are seeking the opportunity to actually be able to participate in the learning, participate in the experience of education and not sort of passively sit there as maybe some 18, 19-year-old freshman, sophomore, traditional age, undergraduates might prefer.

GIBALDI:

They would actually prefer to step into it to take out in a way unload the luggage they have and bring it to the room. When environment like that's created, and they have that opportunity, it's just phenomenal. So I do apply that elsewhere, again, typically dealing with graduate students where you find more of the adult kind of population.

And particularly over the last number of years, there is no traditional aged graduate student almost any more. [LAUGHS] People come back to school at various times, stages of their lives. Yes, the adult learner for me is-- and part of that has to do with my own educational background. I did study how to work with adult learners in workplaces-- one of my master's degrees at Columbia and so on.

So to get to actually use it and apply it and see it work is just incredible. It's all about participation. It's really about allowing people to engage. It's allowing people to offer in a very

safe place with a bunch of other colleagues almost in a room. The 35, 40 of you in a room, it's a safe place.

People start to appreciate one another. People look to one another for assistance. People ask the rest of the class, I'm having this issue at work. Anybody have any advice? I mean, that comes up in the classroom, which we then tie into the discuss-- it's just mind-blowing in a way.

And again, the diversity-- diversity of age, diversity of education, diversity of professions, diversity of what part of the country they're coming from, what part of the world people are coming from-- all sorts of implications that sort of, again, takes the class up to another level in terms of how rich that population is and how much we learn about different generations of people.

CHRISTOPHER DAVIS: You've taught for 20 years. So that's a shudder to do the math on how many students, the total-- of course, of those years.

CARMINE GIBALDI: Please don't, right? [LAUGHS]

CHRISTOPHER DAVIS: But is there anything that you recall as being a particularly a favorite experience or a teaching anecdote or a student that just made the experience just fun or memorable in some way?

CARMINE GIBALDI: I mean, there are a number of experiences that-- yes, and I hope I answer your question that been obviously lots of fun, because I actually try and have fun. Every time we meet, I literally try and have fun, because, again, for me, that's part of it.

I enjoy laughing with students, understanding students. And I think it helps create that kind of environment. There were times, actually, when I was very, very touched by my classes. I mean, I was flying to teach a course at Harvard Extension on September 11. And my plane was literally taking--

CHRISTOPHER DAVIS: That was a Tuesday, right?

CARMINE GIBALDI: That was a Tuesday when the towers were going down. And we had to turn around lower Manhattan and come back to LaGuardia. And when I made it to class the next week, because I couldn't get there obviously that Tuesday.

My class was so present and concerned that it was for me, again, mind boggling. That was the beginning of the semester. I think it was the second time we were going to meet. Yet, the level of cohesion was just incredible. I felt this sense of, wow, I'm really part of this play. Or these people really care.

There was something that just kind of happened for me that on obviously some level was heart-warming, did put sort of a gentle smile on my face. So it wasn't necessarily humorous. But, again, as I said, it was very, very touching. Another time was during Sandy when I'm teaching the web conference course, I'm in New York.

The hurricane pummels New York. And a student taking the course from Afghanistan sends me an email saying, I hope you're OK. I hope you and your family as well. I'm thinking, my gosh, this student is in Afghanistan. And they're concerned about me getting through this storm in New York City.

The level of caring that I feel kind of happens very quickly. And the level of connectedness with-- is that the word-- with the place in the student population, it's just, again, phenomenal, phenomenal, really. So I feel very grateful to be part of HES. And thought it was going to be one semester. Again, I feel very fortunate that it's turned into form.

CHRISTOPHER DAVIS: Mm-hmm. Thank you so much for being here with us today. I appreciate it very much. And I look forward to speaking to you again soon.

CARMINE GIBALDI: I can't say enough about what a wonderful place HES is. So I, again, appreciate you having me.

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CHRISTOPHER DAVIS: You have listened to the *CARC Podcast*. This is a podcast with the Career and Academic Resource Center here at Harvard Extension School. And I hope you will join us again.