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Medical students find their voice using acting techniques

The theatre program at Oakland University is designed as training for a professional life in the performing arts, but the skills theatre students build their proficiency on can be of value to anyone whose career path will involve communicating their ideas.

Recognizing this, last year Professor Steven Loftus of Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine invited Associate Professor of Theatre Lynnae Lehfeldt to teach public speaking skills to medical students. The previous group of second year students had struggled with the capstone presentations they were required to make at the end of the winter semester.

Lehfeldt taught two workshops in 2016 and did so again this February. "I am able to utilize the same training methodology I use with my acting students," she said. "Through a range of exercises I help the students unite their body, breath, and voice. The work combines Kristin Linlater's vocal work found in 'Freeing the Natural Voice' and Amy Cuddy's physical presence work found in her book 'Presence.' Amy Cuddy is famous for her TED talk where she describes power posing."



Lynnae Lehfeldt (third from the right, front row) with medical students from her workshops

The medical students found the workshops empowering. "'Life changer! I took a stroll outside my comfort zone and I don't think I'm going back,'" said Moleca Shannan.

"I loved this class. It has a lot of practicality in life and Medical School," said Gukam Sakthivul.

"This class is all about finding the presentation style that is most authentically you," said Daniel Yamane.

"I learned that there is another voice inside me and I need to let it out," said Shawn Miller.

"Assisting people to find to their vocal and physical presence allows them to tap into their personal power," said Lehfeldt. "I am planning a workshop called 'The Professional Female Voice' for the School of Business."