

In order to fill a cup, according to an ancient proverb, one first must empty it.

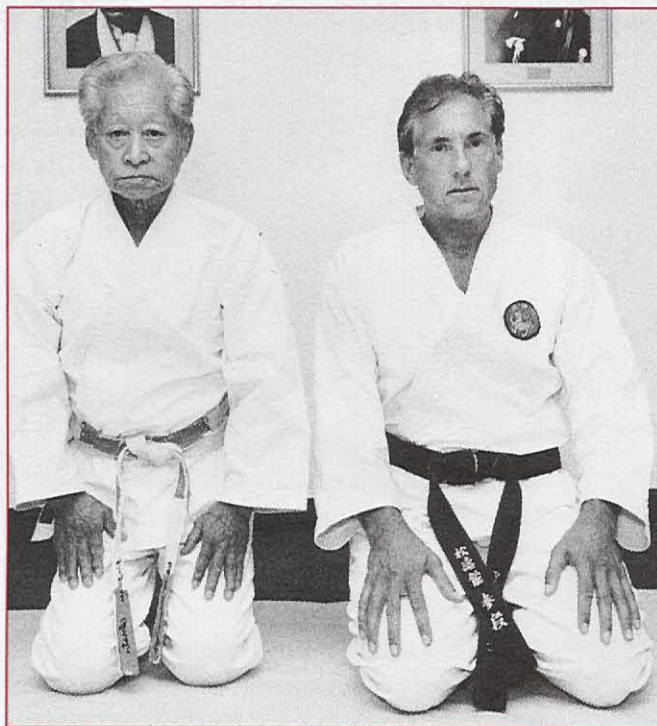
This is a philosophy that Mark Frigo, the Eichenbaum Foundation Distinguished Professor of Accountancy, has subscribed to for many years and utilizes in his courses. It has paid dividends.

Frigo has received three prestigious teaching awards during the last two years: a teaching excellence award from the university's Quality of Instruction Council this year, as well as last year's Gus Economos Distinguished Graduate Teaching Award and the Ledger & Quill Faculty Excellence Award.

In order for people to learn, Frigo says, they must first empty their minds of what they think they know. This is the first thing the popular professor teaches his students at the start of each quarter, and like a benevolent drill sergeant, he begins each class by establishing the students' attitude ("Positive!" they respond in unison) and their state of mind ("Empty cup! Desire to learn!" comes the unanimous reply).

He says his path to becoming a successful corporate management consultant, Certified Public Accountant, Certified Management Accountant and, eventually, university professor really began when he started studying the martial arts as a teen.

Frigo, who grew up in Chicago's Pullman neighborhood, says that karate's focus on training body, mind and spirit appealed to him and has been a part of his life ever since.



Sensei Nakamoto (left), master instructor of Shotokan karate at the Jiu-Jitsu Institute, has taught Professor Mark Frigo for more than 20 years. Frigo holds the rank of San-Dan, third degree black belt.

Even more important have been the discipline, peace and wisdom that the gregarious and athletic professor has gained from studying karate with the same sensei, or teacher, for more than 20 years. He cites 81-year-old Master Sensei Nakamoto as one of his greatest role models.

"In my opinion, the best sensei teaches by example and is an inspiration to his or her students. He is a living example of what is possible," Frigo says. "My sensei has taught me many things, including what it means to be a good learner and teacher and that both student and teacher must maintain mutual respect to be successful.

"These are lessons that I live by and try to pass along to my students in the way that I teach and interact with them," he says.

He says he also has learned a great deal about teaching from accountancy's Professor Ed Cohen, who taught Frigo in his undergraduate days at UIC and has been a mentoring colleague at DePaul throughout Frigo's 20-year tenure.

"My teaching philosophy is to develop and deliver innovative courses and to continue to improve and continue learning as a professor. I want to cultivate the mutual respect between student and teacher that makes teaching and learning one of the rewarding experiences in life." ■