



▶ **A Handbook of Reflections
on the Art of Teaching**

Offered by Past Winners of the
Academy for Effective Teaching Award



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WICHITA STATE
UNIVERSITY



The Academy for Effective Teaching

The purpose of the Academy for Effective Teaching is to recognize the importance of effective teaching to the successful education of the students and, thus, to the mission of the university. To this end we are devoted to fostering effective teaching by assisting in the development of good teachers and the rewarding of accomplished teachers.

In addition to the Academy for Effective Teaching's annual teaching award, Academy members are involved in a variety of supportive roles for the University. These include offering teaching workshops, faculty mentoring and personalized teaching advice.

Three to six new members are added to the Academy each year. An elected eight-person Steering Committee guides the work of the Academy. The activities of the Academy are funded and facilitated by the Office for Faculty Development and Student Success, and the Office of the Provost. The members of the Academy for Effective Teaching are honored retired faculty from all colleges on campus.

The 2011 AET Steering Committee Members are:

- John Belt, Chair
- Linda Bakken
- Sue Bair
- Joyce Cavarozzi
- Elmer Hoyer
- Mahmoud Sawan
- Keith Williamson



Editor's Forward

Teaching is extremely serious to me, and I hope it is serious to you. I have had a very successful career in teaching here at Wichita State University, but it almost never happened. A university professor very early in my undergraduate degree so dismayed me on accounting, on teaching, on myself as a person that I came within a sorrowful weekend of leaving the profession completely. That is why becoming a good teacher is so important to me. This booklet is a collection of importances.

When I arrived on campus in August 1998, I managed to completely miss new faculty orientation. As such, I felt quite overwhelmed. As time passed, I managed to survive those first few semesters with my wits intact and a reasonably competent teaching style emerging. I eventually became aware of an organization called the Academy for Effective Teaching. I came to look upon their webpage of teaching award winners as a "Hall of Fame" of sorts. Even in such an early period of my career, becoming a member of this group was something that I sincerely aspired to but never honestly expected to achieve.

Over time, I was blessed to know a number of the faculty on that list, including John Belt and Bill Jarnagin. Through their careful mentoring I was able to eventually achieve my goal. However, one thing always bothered me. Inspection of the list revealed a number of faculty members who had sadly left the university or had passed away. To some extent, their insight into teaching was lost to time.

A number of discussions with the Academy led to a shared goal to preserve these excellent teachers' thoughts on what has made them the recognized educators they are. This booklet encapsulates those reflections.

Keep this booklet handy, and refer to it as you see fit. You are going where these excellent teachers have already been. You have such an opportunity to benefit from their experiences. Good Luck!

Michael Brigg Flores

July 2011



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Bill Jarnagin (1995-1996)

Teaching Beyond Classroom Delivery

I have always taken a “total package” approach to teaching. It involves not only the aspects that we normally relate to teaching such as knowledge of your subject matter and good classroom delivery, but also includes teaching activities outside the classroom. The more you know and interact with your students, the more you can help them.



These outside activities may just include encouragement for the student to do better in the class or knowledge that the student needs additional help that is not obvious in the classroom setting. More knowledge about students allows you to write better recommendation letters, help the students apply for scholarships, help them find part-time jobs or internships, or provide better information about career development.

With current-day technology, such as emails and texting, it is more difficult to know about and interact with students on a one-to-one basis. However, do not let this obstacle prevent you from extending your teaching beyond just classroom delivery.

Diane Scott (2007-2008)

Failure and Freedom

I tell a story to new managers that applies equally well to new teachers. It goes something like this . . . When you first become a manager, what is different about you the day before you become a manager and the day after? Nothing. You don't know more than you did the day before. You don't have a new special skill set that you didn't possess the day before. This leaves you with two choices. You can be candid with others when there is something you don't know and, more importantly, open with yourself about your areas needing growth. Or, you can try to pretend with yourself and others that you know it all. The first option leaves open the ability to experiment; to try new things; and to fail, learn your lessons, laugh at yourself and try again. The second option locks you into a position of hiding, pretending to know things you don't, fearing you'll be caught in your ignorance and inexperience and protecting your turf (both real and imagined).



All the very best things I do as a teacher, I failed at the first time around. The most engaging exercises, the best illustrative stories, the most useful assignments, and the most effective classroom management tricks I use were almost all resounding duds the first time out. If I'd only stuck with what I knew I could do without any chance of failure or appearance of ignorance, I'd have never even tried the best things I currently use. Acknowledgement and acceptance of the fact that you're going to fail in front of your students gives you the freedom to try new things and learn how to do things better.



Ravi Pendse (2000-2001)

Friend or Mentor or Both



Everything I am today, I owe to all my outstanding teachers and mentors. I believe that for a teacher to be successful in the classroom and beyond a personal connection and relationship is necessary between a student and a teacher. A student should see a teacher as a friend when they need a friend and as a mentor when they need a mentor. How does one establish this relationship? Here are a few simple common sense ideas that I use:

- Learn their names: No matter how large a class is, it is absolutely necessary that we teachers should strive to learn the names of our students. I use the visual roster that is available from Blackboard (our learning management system) to learn the names of each of my students within a week. As they visit with me in my office, I learn more information about each one of them including relevant personal details. I also share information about me. This allows the teacher to start building that relationship.
- Phone calls and emails: If a student misses my class and has not informed me, I actually call the student or send an email using Blackboard. The purpose is to make sure that the person is okay and to offer any help they might need. If necessary and needed, I offer to re-teach an entire class to assist. I found out that I do not need to call too often. Word of mouth network (maybe Facebook) among our students is incredible. They tell each other, "This dude will call."

Ravi Pendse *continued*

He really cares. Let's not miss his class."

- Caring attitude: I know all of us care about our students. We are usually very good at recognizing body language and facial cues. When I notice a student who is normally happy, appearing to be down, I will approach the student after class and ask if everything is OK. Sometimes just a caring ear and a friendly smile is all that is needed. Based on the situation, I will provide appropriate assistance. This is really important for a person who may need that friend and mentor.
- Humor: Students like performers. Not all of us can be comedians, but I am sure we enjoy a laugh or two. We can certainly laugh at ourselves, laugh at current events, and, in general, look approachable and happy. If you recall your best teachers, I am confident many of them had a great sense of humor and a very caring attitude.
- The List: I have maintained a list of all the wonderful attributes of my teachers that I enjoyed as a student. Over the years, I have also gathered attributes of various teachers that a student does not enjoy. I update this horror list each semester. Before going to teach my class (yes I still teach for fun every semester), I review this list with the hope that my actions in the class do not end up on some horror list.

Ken Pitetti (2001-2002)

Keep It Simple, Stupid (KISS)



- Determine where your students are in their professional development and teach them what they need at this level so that they can move on to the next. If you are teaching college algebra, teach basic algebra, not calculus or trigonometry.
- You're the Expert—Write Your Own Stuff—If you can't then go back to graduate school. I teach four different classes and do not use a text book. I write all the material because I know what they need at this point in their professional development—and you should also. If you don't, then find out. The levels of the courses I teach are 400, 500, 700, and 800 and one of these is on-line.
- Be excited and energetic about your subject matter—It's contagious.
- Stay in good physical condition—Be a role model.
- Think of each student as your own child—Be firm but helpful and encouraging.
- Be in or around your office with your door open at least 6 hours each school day.
- Be patient—It takes five years to begin to know what you're doing in the classroom.

Steven Skinner (2004-2005)

Nobody cares how much you know until they know how much you care



To be a good teacher, one needs to be able to build and sustain a relationship with students, based on trust, mutual respect, and care. Students perform much better when you show a genuine interest in them, their future, and their progress. If students see that you take an active interest in them as individuals, they will do their best not to let you down. They will also be much more forgiving when you make a mistake in class.

To build this relationship, I always made an effort to greet students outside the classroom and gave them my full attention when I talked to them or when they came to my office for questions. I also did my best to learn each student's name by studying the visual roster on Blackboard.

Although a little time consuming, becoming more personally involved and friendly with the students made teaching more enjoyable and greatly improved my SPTe results.

Larry Spurgeon (2007-2008)

The Teacher as Artist

"I have come to believe that a great teacher is a great artist and that there are as few as there are any other great artists. Teaching might even be the greatest of the arts since the medium is the human mind and spirit." John Steinbeck



To be effective, a teacher must be respected. A new teacher is granted a measure of respect by students because she has advanced degrees, a title – she is an expert. From that foundation, respect can be squandered or enhanced immeasurably. Some things are within the teacher's control – structure, consistency, preparation, fairness. These skills can be acquired by every teacher and will engender esteem. But the great teacher is an artist, a mystic – she inspires. Where does that come from? I struggle to understand it, much less explain it. It cannot be manufactured. It must be genuine. Fundamentally it means to have a passion to not just convey information, but to inspire. To be a source of inspiration the teacher must be inspired.

"The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires."
William Arthur Ward

Erach Talaty (2001-2002)

How Deep is the Ocean: How High is the Sky?



The caption summarizes my philosophy: there is no limit to improvement.

- Adapt your lectures to the level of students you are teaching – come down to their level. Abandon the ivory tower.
- Every time I teach a class, I write out my lectures in detail and give students a copy. That way, they do not waste time copying from the blackboard or projector. Instead, they can devote their full attention to what I am saying.
- I also hold frequent ‘help sessions’ to work problems and clarify any difficulties. Use real-life experiences to drive home a point – which is easy to do in chemistry because its tentacles reach out into biology, pharmacy, medicine, physics, geology or astronomy.



Pawan Kahol (2002-2003)

An effective teacher:



- Is the one who introduces difficult concepts in an easy and comprehensible way;
- has the abilities to explain and re-explain a topic in many different ways;
- never loses sight of the “big” picture;
- keeps students interested and inspired;
- stays enthusiastic;
- helps students as much inside the class as outside;
- is always looking for and thinking about implementing further improvements;
- introduces a large number of easy-to-visualize-and-comprehend examples and demonstrations;
- elicits examples from students to gauge their level of involvement and understanding;
- makes connections with what is happening in the world to the fields of science, engineering, technology, and medicine;
- teaches with warmth, compassion, conviction, commitment, and creativity;



Pawan Kahol (2002-2003) *continued*

- considers teaching and working with undergraduate students as his/her creed;
- kindles a life-long fire of learning;
- places students before himself/herself;
- prepares students for tomorrow's world;
- makes learning happen;
- is never satisfied with meeting his/her teaching requirements minimally;
- strives to maintain the highest standards and expectations;
- looks after the small details;
- leads by example;
- goes that extra mile with the students both inside and outside the class.

An effective teacher's message to his students is: Do not ever be afraid to apply the principles you have learned to any problem that enters your mind!

Am I an effective teacher? Not that I am completely satisfied, but I keep trying on becoming one!



Jerry Shaw (1999-2000)

On Heritage and Family

- I come from humble people, Osage Indians.
- My mother told me to always speak from my heart.
- My father taught me the work ethic and to be on time.
- I am passionate about my people and that passion is reflected in my teaching. It's from these traits that my students understand my respect for them.
- My purpose in teaching is to develop a mutual respect with my students.





Charles Yang (2003-2004)

One World View

- Always consider fairness to all students.
- Treat students the way you would like the instructors to treat your own children in college



Hamid Lankarani (2000-2001)

Transcending Relationships

The first and most important thing about being an effective faculty member is to make sure that you know the subject matter quite well. If the course is one that the faculty is offering for the first time, it usually is quite time-consuming to go through the material, develop the lecture plans, material coverage, exams, homework assignment, etc. At first, this seems to take a tremendous amount of time, but the more time spent on initial lecture development, the easier it will be in the following semesters teaching the same course.



The teacher/faculty-member needs to convey to the students that he/she cares about them and their learning. Students can sense how much you care for them. Once they sense your caring, students become more interested in your topics and they tend to work harder.

Be passionate about your teaching. Not everyone is always attentive to your lectures, but you see in almost every class a few eyes that are focused on you trying to satisfy their thirst for knowledge. And this is a quite satisfying part of teaching.



Hamid Lankarani *continued*

I have always tried to build a life-long relationship with my students, especially with my graduate students. I have supervised over 300 MS and PHD students in my academic career, and I am still in touch with every single one of these former students. Whoever gets a promotion, gets married, has a child, buys a house, etc., I get an email on this. Teaching is monetarily not a very rewarding career, but there is no feeling better than seeing your former students becoming successful in their careers and seeing them grow.



M. Edwin Sawan (2008-2009)

Enthusiasm and Perseverance:

I believe a good teacher is one who is enthusiastic about sharing knowledge with others. A good teacher does not rely on external motivation, whether rewards or threats, in order to care for students. My strong feeling of care for students follows one of my favorite quotes by Santiago Ramon y Cajal, a Spanish scientist who received the Nobel Prize in 1906: "Enthusiasm and Perseverance Make Miracles." In my opinion, a successful professor must maintain the same excitement that he or she had as a graduate student. I teach each class with a mindset as if it were my first time to teach. I develop a new set of notes, examples, and homework. It is true that I have taught these courses many times before and perhaps will teach them some more. However, I always keep in mind that this is not the case for students. I may have other chances to improve the contents and presentation of a particular class, but each student has only one chance to learn this material. Students will spend the rest of their careers with an impression of me and my subject based on how I treat them in a particular semester, regardless of my performances in other semesters. I approach each class with excitement as if it was my first and strive for perfection as if it was my last. I try my best to be prepared and completely organized before going to each class.



I try to engage in various dialogues about teaching with all my colleagues regardless of their rank or experience. In regular roundtable discussions, we exchange opinions about presentation styles, policies, and regulations. My discussions with junior faculty have been as helpful to me as my discussions with more experienced senior faculty.

Martin Perline (1996-1997)

On Love and Teaching

What makes for an outstanding teacher? It seems to me that it is mandatory that one must love teaching and convey that “love” to the students. While there may be numerous “do’s” and “don’ts” to be effective in the classroom, one needs to be one’s self—to do it your way. One size doesn’t fit all when it comes to teaching.



Without the love of teaching and being one’s self, all the knowledge in the world may fall on deaf ears.

Peer Moore-Jansen (1998-1999)

A Good Teacher

Different people have different philosophies of teaching. I am no different. Some people subscribe to models or trendy guidelines. I suggest teaching, especially good teaching is individually based, and a great teacher to one student may be the worst to another student. Good teaching is therefore not about earning "points" from audiences who may have vastly different reasons or foundations for assessing a teacher.



Nonetheless, quality teaching is what it is, a reflection of an instructor's willingness to reach out, engage and embrace each student.

- Good teaching includes defining the parameters of the teaching environment, the material and specific subject matter. Essential is the instructor's professionalism, level of knowledge, confidence, honesty, and perseverance together with student receptiveness to learning. The instructor who stays current with and brings research and service to their teaching effort is an instructor who is more likely to engage a student audience more holistically in the realms of the student's current environment. This includes the student's role in the University, the college, the major, and eventually, the student's career development.
- Good teaching focuses around engaging students so each is able to understand how the material taught relates to their personal growth and development, not just in their

Peer Moore-Jansen *continued*

professional career, but also their personal life to come.

- A good teacher addresses student concerns and questions with humble confidence and encourages students to recognize their role in the college experience, including learning through class participation. Asking students to knowingly step outside their comfort zone, calling on them to temporarily surrender otherwise long held positions can be most successful to induce critical thinking into issues of method, theory, and fact. Engaging students in creative discussion of subject matters, once the students have been provided with a foundation, is conducive to creative thinking. When students know the parameters of a class or learning environment, when the instructor frames the questions at hand more narrowly in the context of the class and more broadly in the greater societal contexts, students are more likely to address academic challenges with substantive responses and put aside personal reaction or opinion rooted in popular headlines.
- The instructor should always follow-up and stay in touch with their students to maximize the student experience.

John Belt (1995-1996)

Good is the Enemy of Great!

Most of us begin our teaching careers with some apprehension because we have had no formal education in teaching methodology. We want to excel but are not sure how to do that. Over the years we try to become better, and over time, most do become good, competent teachers. However, when we reach this stage, it is easy to become comfortable and lose our drive to improve.



Good is the enemy of great! One thing I did to combat this complacency is to try something new **every** time I taught a class. Admittedly, most of them did not work and were rejected. However, about one out of every four or five did prove to be useful, and over the years, I accumulated a considerable repertoire of really effective teaching techniques that served me well.

Lesson: Get in the habit early of constant experimentation. Never give up the quest for excellence in the classroom.

Prakash Ramanan (1998-1999)

Adaptive Lecture

Do NOT use slides (such as PowerPoint). It is important to be nimble **IN** the classroom and adjust what you are going to say based on what happened (such as student questions, lost looks, or any new ideas/thoughts you came up with) in the preceding 5 or 10 minutes.



This could involve the reordering of your thoughts and of the points you want to make. There is **ABSOLUTELY** no way you can predict the best ordering **BEFORE** you go to that particular lecture.

Slides lock you in with what you prepared before going to class, preventing you from adjusting your lecture **IN** the classroom. Teaching without slides (use handwritten notes YOU made) needs more preparation, as it would force YOU to understand the material and teach it better.



Stephen Brady (1999-2000)

Words That Rhyme With “Care”

I believe that one is on the road to excellence in teaching if one does a good job with respect to several similar sounding words. These include to prepare, to be there, to care, to be fair, to share, and to repair. To elaborate:



Prepare – The instructor’s proper and extensive preparation for a class can make any presentation and learning experience better. Strive to ensure that your worst lecture is still adequate. Present more than what is in the required text. Try for a consistent product in your lectures. Show “enthusiasm” for your subject.

Be there – physically Try to never miss class; and, be on time. If you must get a substitute, make sure the substitute will do a competent job. Find ways to encourage student attendance. Consider using lack of attendance for (at least the threat of) a semester grade level decrease. If you can get them to attend class, you can (if necessary) “sneak” knowledge into them. Make every class interesting and informative, so the student will be afraid to miss.

Be there – otherwise Convince your students that you “are there” for them. Encourage questions. Don’t postpone answers. Keep office hours, and allow communication at all hours. Outside of class, try not to turn away a student who has questions whether or not their arrival at your door is at a propitious time. Show interest when they tell you about their interests and goals. Try never to show anger or impatience inside or outside the class. Try to keep your own problems out of the classroom environment. Be a good “coach.” Take student requests, complaints and comments seriously. Sometimes, a student wants only for someone to “listen.” So, listen and try never to act like you would rather be somewhere else or that you are short of time.

Be fair –Treat every student fairly – in class, in grading papers, in

Stephen Brady *continued*

determining grades, etc. Make sure that the material on which the students are tested was adequately covered in your class presentations as well as phrased in a style similar to homework questions they considered—especially in the lower level classes. Try to build a classroom atmosphere in which students feel comfortable enough to be able to ask questions freely. Try to get the student to overcome subject or test “anxiety.” Finding topics in which they can have a “success experience” can greatly improve their chances of overall success. Make the first question on a test an item they can answer correctly.

Share – If you have varied interests, hobbies, extensive travel, or are multilingual, and if any of these facets can be made relevant for the classroom, consider using them. Students may hear and ask about some country you have visited in which they have an interest. This provides the opportunity (usually outside of class) to develop a rapport with students you might not reach. Such discussions usually lead to better performance in the classroom also. Foreign students will “light up” when they learn you have been in their country or when you say one of the few phrases you might know in their native language.

Repair – Find out what might need to be “repaired.” Learn about which students may be at risk in your class due to previous unsuccessful enrollments. Try to get a good feeling for the “pulse” of the class, what background students have individually, what appropriate concepts are in their long term memories, what special circumstances or concerns exist, etc. This helps determine the pace of the class, any reviewing or “repairing” that should be done, and the depth to which you can go.

Overall, since the purpose of a university is to provide a place and means for “pursuing knowledge,” try to get the students to worry about knowledge instead of grades. Point out to them that if they truly understood a subject through daily “preparation,” they wouldn’t have to “cram” for a test and they would still get an A. **Dare** them to try this.



Mary Faragher (2006-2007)

Put it into Practice

Early in your teaching career, develop a philosophy. It may be based on personal experience, proven models, or someone else's philosophy. Keep it short, reasonable and logical for your area of expertise and practice.



Write it down, and keep it where you can see it daily. This keeps you focused, motivated and allows you to know when it needs to be updated.

Focus on three major foundational points and build from there. You will be surprised to find that your three points rarely change, although how you put them into practice does change.

Lesson: Keep it simple, and put it into practice.

Kathleen Perez (2000-2001)

Reaching Students In and Out of Class



- Be yourself in the classroom. Let your students come to know you as a person. You will be seen as more approachable by your students.
- For a few minutes at the beginning of a class session, when appropriate, discuss current events that relate to your discipline or to a recent class topic. This is an easy way to reinforce prior class material and/or reinforce why studying the specific discipline is useful in today's world.
- For new students (transfer students or freshmen) who receive a "D" or "F" on a test early in the semester, announce that you would like them to stop by during office hours. When they come, discuss how they prepared for the test. New students may have preconceived ideas about how to prepare for tests that are incorrect (e.g., if I come to class, I don't need to read the text). Or, in talking with the student, you may suggest a simple change that can result in noticeable improvement.

M. Edwin Sawan (2008-2009)

Responsibility rather than Authority:

In my opinion, a teacher needs to establish a relationship with her or his students based on responsibility rather than authority. This would help re-affirm such a relation as long-lasting friendship.



Each semester, I explain in detail the rationale of each item in the class policy as well as each test regulation. Some of these regulations may appear to be strict. However, they have never been violated or even challenged. Students are motivated by their sense of responsibility to follow these policies and regulations. Furthermore, I always try my best to ensure that the students' academic experience is not compromised when these regulations are strictly enforced.

One of these regulations prohibits students from asking any questions during a test. No exceptions are ever made, even if they feel there is a typing error, or if they think that a problem requires additional information to solve. In those cases, the policy requires them to make any necessary assumptions on their own and proceed to solve the problem. On my part, I take firm steps to ensure that such cases are impossible to occur. I prepare the test copies myself, at least one week before the test date. I personally check each test packet after being stapled.



M. Edwin Sawan *continued*

Then, I solve the test problems a few days after preparing them to confirm that all the necessary information and tools, such as mathematical tables, are available.

I have not received any complaints about this policy. In fact, many students expressed their full understanding of my reasons for applying it. As I explain to the students, asking me questions about a problem during the test could end up hurting their effort to solve it. Asking questions during a test is different from doing so in class or during office hours. When they ask questions during class or in my office, I make every effort to be as clear as possible. However, to respond to their questions during a test, I make every effort to be as evasive as possible, or else I would be giving them unfair hints of the right solution. Furthermore, speaking with a specific student during a test will distract me and may compromise my role as proctor.

Walter Mays (1996-1997)

Faces and Names

I would like to offer a practical suggestion that has served me well. I teach classes with 20 to 30 students and sometimes face as many as sixty new individuals at the beginning of a semester. The subjects covered require lecture presentation but with student participation, questions and answers, and skills that need to be monitored. I often send students to the board to work out problems.



It is important to be able to connect names and faces as soon as possible. So, on the first day of a new course, I bring in a digital camera and take a photo of each student in the order in which he/she appears on the roll. This gives me a complete, up-to-date visual list allowing me to practice quick name-face recognition. My goal is to be able to call each student by name at the second class meeting.

I also ask students to stop me in the hall outside of class during the first couple of weeks and briefly introduce themselves. I have found that these two steps help to develop rapport and improve retention rates.

L. Scott Miller (1997-1998)

A Dose of Reality

Getting students to actually apply course content is amazingly effective — for you and your students. I'm talking about having the students do more than homework or exams. Specifically, take any opportunity possible to create projects or in-class activities that require students to actually use what they are learning. Make them feel like they are out of school and on the job. Don't worry about including every element of the topic in this effort. Focus on incorporating a reasonable set of fundamentals. A simple, yet realistic, project engages and helps students (and you) really learn.

From the instructor's perspective, I won't say project preparation and execution is easy. However, I will say everyone gets better at it the more they do it. The educational effect is amazing.





Royce Smith (2009-2010)

A Heart for Teaching

The beauty of teaching rests in the ability that each of us has within us to encourage our students to quest and to question—not to accept the world as others see it, but to actively seek out the intricacies and eccentricities of knowledge and come to their own conclusions about the ways we live now. I have come up with a few useful observations that have helped me think carefully about just how important the charge of a university teacher is these days:



On the first day of class, never be afraid to admit that you don't have all the answers to the questions of your field. This might seem like an obvious issue, but for students, such an admission makes you more human—and helps to diffuse the first-day jitters. It also makes you seem more like a cohort in their learning—a teacher who carries with him/her both a sense of accessibility and humility.

Don't make YOUR bad day the STUDENT'S bad day. For all of the wonderful and model teachers that each of us has had in our academic careers, we can also remember the indelible impacts of the bad ones. Keep in mind that a short, condescending, or disrespectful tone with students can create lasting memories that might not only affect the way students view you as a teacher, but also your discipline (and their future within it). Strive to be the teacher that students remember as a lighthouse in the unsettling, challenging days of college study.

Always wake up remembering why you became a teacher (even on the days that you are confronted with a half-brewed pot of coffee and a pile of ungraded exams). Each day you interact with your students carries with it the opportunity to bring new learners into the fold of your field.

Good teaching requires good research. When it comes to the developments, changes, and moments of brilliance in your field, know them well so that your students can know them. After all, they will soon be making the huge strides that your teaching will address in the future.



Royce Smith *continued*

Don't be afraid to take risks or to fail as a teacher. Try new approaches, explore new possibilities in your classroom, and share your visions with your colleagues. All good teachers have had what they viewed at one moment as an innovative or revolutionary idea, only to find that it didn't seem to work out as planned. Learn from the things that didn't work for you just as much as you savor the moments that your teaching hit the target.

Broaden the horizons of your students by globalizing your classroom and your curriculum. Kansas is big, but the world is even bigger. Think about how an immersive curriculum that exposes students to new ideas, cultures, ideologies, and perspectives can enhance their effectiveness as growing learners in your field.

Always remember the types of learners you have in your classroom and how diverse the learning community of WSU is. Be supportive of their dreams and ambitions, remembering that several people along your path to being a teacher extended the same faith and support to you.

Watch your colleagues and the ways they teach, learn, think, and act as members of the WSU community. Remember that even the colleagues with whom you rarely agree can give you interesting perspectives about teaching, your discipline, and the university from which YOU can benefit. Cultivate the ideas of those you respect and strive to consider the ideas of those you have yet to understand.

Keep your expectations for your students high and be an advocate who reminds them of how capable they are of meeting the goals you set for them. Doing so will give them the confidence they need to set their own standards when you are no longer there to guide them through the journey of learning.

Find, maintain, and savor time for yourself. Remember the things you love—your family or loved ones, a good book, a workout at the gym, a good glass of pinot noir—and remember the advantages of good self-care. Giving to others requires giving to oneself. Teaching drains the batteries; know what it is in your life that recharges them to the fullest.

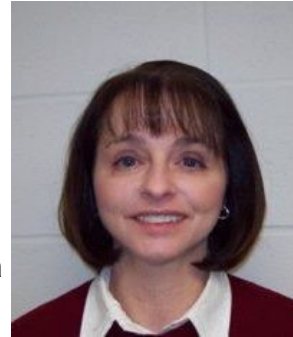


Diana Cochran-Black (1999-2000)

Life-Long Learning

My best teaching advice is never become complacent and believe you have mastered the art of teaching.

- Be a life-long learner in your area of expertise.
- Try to stay current in the area of educational technology as students today learn differently than in the past and this will never change.
- Teaching is both an honor and a privilege.
- Strive to make a positive impact every day.



Ron Matson (1995-1996)

Teaching is Very Personal Business

Through my forty-five years in the classroom, I have noticed that when the lessons are made more personal the learning is easier and more complete. You can put any number of names on this awareness; gestalt, humanistic, comprehensive, holistic, and the like. To me it represents a maxim: people learn best through multiple modalities. When the lesson is personal, it embraces the core human experience where body, mind, spirit, and emotion come together as one. The narrative story may be the best example of tying together the totality of human experience into a single learning event. The most revered texts and orations are vignettes which capture the creative sensibilities of the learner, especially if delivered with honesty, humor, and humility.

Teaching is more than telling stories, but the personally delivered stories through which we teach and illustrate ideas are often elements of the best lessons.





Nicholas Smith (2003-2004)

“The Little People”

If you are relatively new to teaching and have just come through the rigors of a doctoral program, you might want to remember that your younger students are true neophytes academically and are not used to the high standards you so recently went through. You will need to exercise a bit more patience at this point. Students learn quickly which professors are good to work with — just check out ratemyprofessor.com and you will find the whole gamut of responses. Remember that old phrase — “It’s not necessarily just what you say but how you say it.” It is unfortunate that most of us in higher education are never given any real training in how to lecture to a large class or even interact with students in and out of the classroom. These skills must be learned on the job and by observing other successful professors.



Your attitude toward students is very noticeable to them, and they can tell if you are interested in them. All of us have had good and bad teachers, and I will bet that the ones we felt were good seemed to care that we were really getting something from their lectures and presentations. If you teach in a large classroom situation, you must almost develop acting skills and deliver your materials as though you were on stage trying to sell your subject. As a teacher, the most gratifying thing is to see the “light bulb” moment in a student when they understand a concept for the first time so completely that they will always remember it. Also, you can feel this when they engage with you in discussion about the topic. Is this tiring and draining? — You bet it is, but this is what we are paid to do. I even know of some of our award winning history and philosophy professors who have dressed in costume and assumed the personalities of the important people the students are studying. While this approach may not be in your comfort zone, your knowledge of cutting edge interactive technology could be your ‘shtick’.

In the last few years I have noticed that students seem to respond to the “tone of voice” of the professor. What I am really talking about is a positive or up-beat delivery. While this is important in classroom/lecture situations, it is even more important when working in one-on-one or small group settings

Nicholas Smith *continued*

where there is an exchange of ideas. How you handle that incorrect verbal answer can make all the difference in a student's attitude toward you and the subject you are teaching (which may also be reflected in your student evaluations). Instead of a blunt "No! next person," you might first think about saying "are you sure?" and if the student still falters, move ahead with "Ok, does anyone else have something to say or contribute?" Critiques, whether they are written or verbal, should always encourage improvement and never belittle.

When I first came to WSU, I had the occasion to visit with one of the faculty members in my area who had been at the university for several years. I was trying to get to know him better and just asked him about the quality of the students at the school. I had been teaching at the University of Oklahoma for three years before coming up to Wichita and felt the move to be a good one as WSU's School of Music had a very good reputation. My colleague "friend" described the students as being good for the most part, but he really didn't seem too enthusiastic about them. Then he let out a statement which I have never forgotten and which should be the bane of any good professor: "Oh, you don't really need to worry that much about *the little people* anyway. They aren't that important." I quickly concluded our conversation and knew I would not align myself with his ideas. He only lasted another three years and moved to a strictly performance position in a full-time orchestra. While there are obviously great rewards for personal research, students learn quickly which professors are interested in really teaching and which seem impatient to get through the information so they can get back to their own projects.

Finally, we should all view students as a resource for the future as well as being advocates for our subjects and area of expertise. While we know they are primarily interested in their major area, many students come away with a great appreciation for the broadness of the education our state universities provide. It gives the citizens of tomorrow a chance to be "lifelong learners" which means a more intelligent and wise population – a worthy goal for all of us who teach.



Jen-Chi Cheng (2010-2011)

Respect Every Student

With such a diverse student body at Wichita State University, I believe it is essential to address the particular learning style of each student. Every student has his or her own learning curve and personal obstacles to academic excellence. A key part of understanding and respecting students includes giving them the instructional support they need to succeed. Don't look down on a student simply because of his or her academic performance. To help my students further, I give small group review sessions in the three days leading up to each exam. The sessions are voluntary and are held at the Shocker Lounge or Panera Bread, lasting 1-2 hours each time. Students note that these informal environments are very conducive to learning.



My actions in teaching and advising are guided by putting myself in my students' shoes. I often pause to ask myself what I would have valued in a professor. Their progress is my comfort, their success my pride. Former colleague Dr. Maurice Pfannestiel gave me these words at his retirement: "Applaud those who got an 'A' in your class because they make teaching fun, respect those who earned a 'B' because they have worked hard in your class, and show affection to those who received a 'C' as they very likely will be the main donors to WSU." While his sense of humor gave us a good laugh, his wisdom reminded me to treasure every student I had the opportunity to teach.



Denise Maseman (1998-1999)

Taking Stock

My best advice to a new faculty member is to connect with and listen to your students. That means beyond the end of the semester teaching evaluations you should ask questions about their views of the textbook, assignments, class format, etc. It doesn't mean you have to agree with all of their views, but it is very important to have a sense of the ever changing student attitudes and approaches to higher education.





Doris Burgert (2002-2003)

The Big Picture

Having been both a student and a teacher—often concurrently—I have frequently noted that students fail to see “the big picture” and, in fact, lose many of the details because they fail to retain the big picture. Their failure is caused by interference (too much new information interfering with older information) and simple time decay and failure to use the information.



To combat this memory problem, I begin every class with a question and answer review from the previous lesson or lessons. I only focus on major topics, issues, or concepts—the “big picture” information that I believe students will need to remember. The review can be oral or written. If the review is written, I don’t collect the students’ work but let them keep the review questions so that they have a record of what we reviewed as key information. If I ask the questions orally and have students write a brief answer, then I tell students that if they don’t know the answer they should jot down the question so that they have a record of what was important that they didn’t know. Sometimes a review is in a multiple choice format. If so, then we answer the questions together. I read a question and its answer options and ask students to hold up one, two, three, or four fingers “under their chin or in front of their chest” to indicate their answer choice: 1=A, 2=B, 3=C, 4=D. By having students answer this way, I can then scan the class and see how many correct answers we have and who has a correct answer. That information allows me to estimate the class’ overall understanding, and it allows me to call on a student with the correct answer to explain the question and answer. I also ask true/false and yes/no questions; to answer these, students show me a thumbs up or down. Occasionally, I ask students to give me a thumbs up or down if they have understood what we have just covered. Since these thumbs up and down are also shown in front of the students’ chests, they are less likely to indicate that they do understand when they don’t. While these reviews are very beneficial for students, they see them as no “risk” since I’m not counting the activity as a score or grade. And while the reviews are very helpful to students, they don’t require a great deal of preparation and no grading on my part. On the other hand, I can use their responses to help me



Doris Burgert *continued*

make adjustments in my teaching. I view these informal assessments as “assessment for learning” instead of “assessment of learning.”

During class, I use the abbreviation CPR to help me review and assess understanding. This teaching tip came from a WSU workshop for teachers more than ten years ago. Accordingly I can’t claim it as my own, but I’ve certainly used it to great advantage. The letters stand for Content, Participation, and Review. After about 20 minutes of teaching the content, I add some participation and review. The participation usually entails applying newly learned material to questions or exercises or “real life” situations and then reviewing those questions or exercises as a whole class. The review is done with the participation and also at the closing of the class session. Applying CPR every 20 minutes helps students remain active participants in their learning and allows me to identify and clarify any weaknesses or misunderstanding.

At the end of class I also present a quick review. I often tell students that answering 3-5 questions correctly is their “ticket out of class.” I ask key questions based on our work that class session and then give students 2-3 minutes to think about the answers or to discuss their answers with another student close to them. Sometimes the class is asked to name important concepts and explain why they are important. Then, of course, we discuss students’ answers to the questions or the key concepts they have suggested. These constant reviews and checks are an easy way for me to monitor students’ understanding and retention of key concepts—helping them, I hope, to retain the “big picture.” The reviews also help students remain engaged in and responsible for their own learning.



Melvin Kahn (2006-2007)

Powerful Practicalities



I would suggest that you adopt a teaching philosophy that provides consistent benchmarks for your teaching approach. My philosophy is based on two important statements: “The mind is a fire to be lit, not a vessel to be filled,” and “The effective teacher possesses the combination of goodness and wisdom.”

- Set high standards and challenge students to expand their minds. Word will spread that you are rigorous, will enhance your reputation, and will help attract good students.
- Know the names of your students as soon as possible.
- Let students know that you are interested in them and enthusiastically welcome their visits, or if they prefer, meeting them on campus for coffee.
- Always treat students with respect and never insult or belittle them. If you must criticize a student’s performance, do it in private.
- Prepare thoroughly before each session. If you can’t answer a student’s question, admit it, note it, and research it to respond at the next class.
- If possible, vary your teaching approaches to avoid boring your students. Depending on the subject, you can change between lectures, simulations, meaningful provocative discussion questions (limit idle chatter and filibustering), videos, PowerPoint slides, student debates, and guest experts with competent insights.

Barbara Gonzalez (1996-1997)

Necessary Transitions

Thomas Jefferson said “I cannot live without books”. Times have changed as books now seem secondary to so many other means of information access. That access holds true not only for students, but for educators as well. Although not an easy transition for some, it is a necessary one.



I still find great comfort in books. I must challenge myself to keep current and reach students with the methods that they understand and maneuver readily. Books are still there, but more importantly the words — the ideas, facts, theories, joys, knowledge — are still there, whether on paper or electronic form.

The challenge for the educator continues to be creating a desire in students to want to seek it out and enrich themselves in ways they hadn't considered as part of their discipline of study.



Michael Flores (2005-2006)

A Sensor for Salience

Accounting, for all its representations in media and pop culture, is nothing more than reporting on an environment: the financial state of some thing or one. On the surface, a blander topic is hard to find. Images of tax returns and green eyeshades come to mind. My task is to take this thing called accounting, predispositions and all, and make it salient to my students. This environment is not confined to a textbook. The environment of accounting is all around my students: the internet, newspapers, journals, and local professionals.



My job is to be a sensor of that environment and bring salient material early and often into the classroom. New events and changes in the world can make the teaching environment more salient to the student. Students are much more likely to retain facts gleaned from a real life case as opposed to something generically written in a textbook by someone they don't know. For me, more salience translates to better learning for more students. I would give you the same charge: seek real information that makes your class more salient to your students. I'm convinced that if I can do it in a mundane subject such as accounting, you can as well!

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Michael Brigg Flores

July 2011



Notes



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