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Teaching Philosophy

Most of us have moments in our lives where we examine and evaluate what we have accomplished as well as what we would like to achieve in the future. For me, this self assessment was a critical juncture and turning point in my life. Prior to entering academia, I had a successful career as a consultant; first in the information technology arena and then, in marketing research. While I enjoyed my work, I often wondered if I was making a real contribution in the world. After a great deal of introspection, I realized that what I wanted most was to make a difference in the lives of others. In thinking about how I could do this, I reflected on the many people who have had a positive influence on my life. When I looked for the common thread that joined these individuals together, I realized that they were all teachers. One college professor, in particular, stood out among them all. This professor not only taught classes, he lived them. He had the energy, drive and excitement that made me want to participate and work harder than I had ever worked before. This professor was always there for me and was not only a scholar but an inspiration. He believed in me more than I believed in myself and always told me to make my dreams a reality. I wanted to do for others what he had done for me. That was when I made the decision to change my career and become a teacher.

If I had to use a single word to describe my teaching philosophy, I would choose the word engagement. This is at the heart of what I do as I try to engage the students both in and out of the classroom. The following tenets are what I subscribe to and practice in my teaching:

Actions Speak Louder than Words

Teaching is not a spectator sport. Students learn little by merely sitting in a classroom listening to a lecture or through rote memorization of terminology and techniques. It is critical that students be able to apply what they are learning to the real world. My approach is that students understand the implications of what they learn and to do so they need to talk about it, question it intelligently and be able to provide cohesive written and oral analyses. One of my goals in teaching is for students to live the experience so that they can make what they learn a part of themselves. I am a strong believer in using consultative experiences with real companies. Consulting projects provide a win-win-win. Students benefit by being able to immediately and meaningfully apply their knowledge and skills. They are also forced to deal with the real-world ramifications of their actions. Clients benefit by partnering in the education process of the next generation of business professionals. Many clients also receive services they desperately need but could otherwise not afford. As the instructor I also benefit as projects force me to make what I teach directly applicable to business and industry.

Hard Work Makes Happy People

I must work harder than my students. I have high standards for my students and I am viewed as a demanding teacher. In my marketing research class, for example, I expect the students to provide consultant-quality deliverables for their clients. This means that students must often refine deliverables more than once. I have also learned that by expecting more, I tend to get more from my students. I understand, however, that this is a two-way street. In order to engender these high expectations, I must be willing to go the extra mile myself. I believe that it is important that I meet my commitments to students and be continually willing to raise the bar and not become complacent about what I know.

It's All about Relationships

I believe that student-faculty interaction is important, particularly outside of class. I work very hard to learn my students' names early in the semester. I want my students to e-mail me, call me or stop by my office, whether it be to discuss an assignment, their job search or just life. I leave my door open so that my students know they are welcome. I feel strongly that this keeps

students involved and engaged in my classes. It is often outside of the classroom where I feel I have made the biggest impact on an individual student's life. Sometimes a few words of encouragement on a bad day can make the difference between a student's ultimate success or failure.

Change with the Times

Teaching is a dynamic profession. To be successful, I believe that I must be innovative and embrace change. I consistently work on my classes to incorporate new ideas, practices and technologies. Because times change and students enter with different skill levels, it is important that I adapt what I do and how I think. to the current business culture.

Giving Feedback

It is my responsibility to provide my students with feedback and to do so in a timely manner. If I give a test or an assignment, I grade them right away (most of the time returning them during the next class period). This is important because students need to know where they have done well and where they may need improvement. Quality of feedback is also important. Assigning a grade with no comments on a paper, for example, does not help a student assess their competencies. I strive to provide written feedback to my students so that they can make continual improvement.

I'm Only Human Too

I believe that showing my students that I am a human being is important to my success as a teacher. When I make a mistake, I admit it right away and resolve it. I want my students to feel free to question and challenge what we discuss in class as it helps them to be more critical thinkers. I also enjoy sharing pieces of myself and my life experiences with my students; I believe this makes me more real to my students.

Guiding through the Rough Terrain

I serve as a mentor and role model to my students. Although I am an academic, I am also a business person. I have found that students find valuable my blend of current business examples and my own personal experiences in industry and consulting over the past 20 years. For all of my students (and especially my female students) I have been able to serve, by example, as a marketing professional role model. I have been very active in working with my students to prepare them for the job market and to guide them as they begin their careers. Besides doing traditional things like discussing career paths and reviewing resumes, I spend a great deal of time working with students to seek unique opportunities and experiences. By working with student organizations such as the RU Highlander Chapter of the American Marketing Association, taking students to meetings such as the Direct Marketing Association's (Washington Chapter) University Day and coordinating applications for DMA collegiate institutes and the Martin Agency Seminar, I am helping students with their professional development, education and networking skills.

Loving What You Do

Last, and most important, I am passionate about what I do. I truly love doing marketing and teaching marketing. Conveying passion, I believe, makes students want to learn more (even about subjects that may initially feel intimidated by or not like) and become excited about learning. One of the greatest satisfiers to me as a teacher is that my students almost always comment on my enthusiasm for the subjects I teach. This alone makes me feel that I have achieved a certain measure of success and am making an impact on the lives of my students.