
March 1998 University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

From the Office of Associate Dean

Three Essential Teacher Competencies

Adapted from Anticipation and Preparation: A Teacher's Survival Guidebook,
1997 Lowell E. Hedges

Three competencies seem to be basic to and essential for good teaching. They are being “with it,” being in charge, and being student centered. The following descriptions (edited for college-level use) could serve as guiding principles for our teaching.

Some may say that the concepts are too basic. After all, college teachers are dealing with adults. Perhaps surprisingly to some, these three essential competencies are appropriate at all levels. While some differences do exist between “adult” learners and “youth” learners, nearly all will respond favorably to teaching that exemplifies the basics of pedagogy.

This is a long list; don't feel overwhelmed. Instead, identify one or two areas in each of the three competency areas where you could devote some energy in making positive change. After those have been “mastered,” choose additional examples. In time, you and your students will notice a positive change.

1. Being “with it”

- Recognizes verbal and nonverbal behaviors that could lead to class problems, such as inattention or boredom.
- Can keep class going while attending to students' behavior and responses.
- Senses what is going on with the class and individuals.
- Uses appropriate interventions and adjustments as feedback from students is received.

- **Is “smart;” knows about teaching, learning, the subject taught, people in general, and students in particular. Uses this knowledge to keep class moving.**
- **Can empathize with feelings; cares for students and is able to show that caring through actions and words.**
- **Supports students with positive comments and draws them further into the learning process.**
- **Uses humor; speaks with enthusiasm.**
- **Is able to restate questions and comments accurately because of being in touch with students individually and as a group.**
- **Is up-to-date technically.**
- **Uses purposeful movements; is able to change body speed and motion to fit the action of the class (sitting, standing, walking).**
- **Knows what is going on in the industry and campus community.**
- **Interacts with faculty and campus community; emulates best skills with colleagues.**

2. Being in charge

- **Leads discussion skillfully; is a capable facilitator. Moves at a challenging pace.**
- **Shows business-like behavior.**
- **Concentrates on what is going on. Anticipates student actions and reactions.**
- **Is aware of student needs.**
- **Stands up straight; uses purposeful movements; has eye contact.**
- **Responds to questions and comments with body as well as voice.**
- **Has a voice loud enough to be heard well, but not unpleasant.**
- **Uses clear instructions and wording.**
- **Is able to pause without discomfort.**
- **Knows and uses student names.**
- **Recognizes and uses humor when appropriate.**
- **Remembers and refers to previous actions and comments in the class.**
- **Thinks and communicates logically.**
- **Prepares lessons well.**
- **Senses what is going on with the class and individuals.**
- **Is friendly, but keeps clear boundaries.**
- **Respects the rights of the individual student.**
- **Uses an appropriate degree of control and organization in the classroom and lab.**
- **Has high expectations of student performance.**
- **Is serious about the job of teaching.**

- Encourages group ownership of goals and achievement.
- Involves students and uses their expertise.

3. Being student-centered in teaching

- Holds beliefs and values that relate to caring for the individual.
- Wants to know about each student so as to be of the most help.
- Shares personally with students; establishes a two-way relationship.
- Is keenly aware of student needs.
- Structures the daily lesson plans around solving students' present and future needs.
- Creates group ownership of the objectives of the class, lesson, program.
- Has the ability to listen.
- Makes the instruction comprehensible to students. Uses relevant examples.
- Involves all students.
- Stimulates thinking and reasoning.
- Takes time to get to know the individual student. Attends department functions; interacts with students.
- Is willing to give up and hand over some of the direction and control of the learning process to individual students.

Gardner Teaching Enhancement Awards

Three additional Karl E. Gardner Teaching Enhancement Grants have been awarded as a result of Spring Semester competition. Recipients include:

Darrel J. Kesler, Animal Sciences, for developing a research demonstration activity for Animal Sciences 110 and 231

Michael Hutjens, Animal Sciences, for computer software and materials for Animal Sciences 100, 201 and 199

Patrick Tranel, Crop Sciences, for designing laboratory exercise for a new course Crop Sciences 226

CLASS ATTENDANCE

The Office of the Dean of Students has compiled the following information about class attendance policy. Detailed information can be found in the *Code on Campus Affairs and Handbook of Policies and Regulations Applying to All*

Students (Code). The *Code* is available in all University residence halls, certified units and at the Office of the Dean of Students, 300 Student Services Building. Additionally, the *Code* may be found at http://www.uiuc.edu/admin_manual/code/

What is the University policy about class absences?

The policy (rule 34.A.1.) states “Class attendance is expected of all students at the University of Illinois.”

How is the class absences policy implemented?

Instructors determine the attendance policy for their classes. Some instructors may not require attendance at classes. Other instructors take attendance at classes. Other instructors take attendance at each class session. The attendance policy will be stated in the course syllabus (outline) or announced at the first class session. Students who are unsure about the attendance policy in a particular class should talk to the instructor to clarify expectations.

How do students get an excuse for an unavoidable absence from classes?

The policy (rule 34.A.3.) states that absences from class exercises must be explained to the instructor and supporting evidence provided on request. Students are responsible for contacting each instructor to arrange extensions on assignment or exam deadlines.

What is “supporting evidence” to document an absence?

Instructors determine acceptable supporting evidence. Examples of supporting evidence include a McKinley visit record, bill or appointment card from a private physician, court order, wedding program or obituary notice or funeral program.

How do students get an “official” letter if required by the instructor?

Students who will be absent from classes due to an extended illness, hospitalization, death in the family or unavoidable emergency may contact the Emergency Dean at (217) 333-0050 to request a letter.

What if the attendance policy allows a specified number of absences or dropping of a quiz or test grade without penalty and students become subject to a penalty because of illness?

Such a policy is generally intended to allow for the unexpected. Students who choose not to attend class or miss a test and then become ill or have an emergency may be penalized at the instructor's discretion. Students who are subject to a penalty because of repeated or continued illness should discuss their situation with their instructor.

What if religious observances and practices cause students to miss class?

The policy (rule 34.A.4.) states that instructors must reasonably accommodate a student's religious beliefs, observances, and practices in regard to class attendance and work requirements.

What if students must miss a final exam because of illness or a death in the family?

Students must contact their *college dean* to request an excused (EX) grade for any missed final exams. Undergraduate students then must contact their instructors to arrange to complete course requirements by a specified date in the following semester (dates can be found in the Timetable).

What if students have vacation or travel plans that require them to leave campus early or return late?

University calendars, including semester beginning and ending dates, Thanksgiving vacation and spring break dates, and the final exam schedule are listed in the Timetable. The calendar includes the calendar for the current semester as well as for two semesters in advance. Students may have quizzes or exams the day before or the day after vacations which they are required to attend. Students may be required to take an exam on the last day of scheduled exams. To avoid potential complications, vacation plans should be made to accommodate the University calendar.

Who dares to teach must never cease to learn.

— John Cotton Dana

How do students get phone numbers for their instructors or an academic department?

Most instructors list their phone number(s) on their syllabus. University information operators can be reached at (217) 333-1000.

How can ACES Faculty be fair to students?

Include on the course syllabus a statement such as “Students are expected to be familiar with and follow University Policy regarding class attendance, Section 34 of the *Code of Policies and Regulations Applying to All Students*.”

Clearly state on the course syllabus any attendance policies for the course. Distribute a written syllabus during the first week of class. Note all required activities (tests, field trips, etc.) so that students know in advance of potential conflicts.

Be prepared to address missed deadlines. Know what is an “excuse” and how you will respond. Be consistent in dealing with absences.

Ed Tech Grants

Congratulations to the following ACES Faculty for being awarded a course development grant from the Educational Technologies Board.

David Miller, J. Lee Beverly, Charles Graves, Walter Hurley, Darrel Kesler and Matthew Wheeler, Animal Sciences -- *Enhancing Lectures and Laboratories for Students in Animal Sciences*

Michael Hutjens, Animal Sciences -- *Internet Teaching Modules for Extramural Courses*

Darin Eastburn, Cleo D’Arcy, and Bruce Bertram, Crop Sciences -- *A World Wide Web Site to Increase Agricultural Literacy*

T. W. Fermaninan and H.T. Wilkinson, Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences -- *Turfgrass Pest Management: 21st Century Technology*

Gary Kling, Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences -- *Upgrade and Adaptation of UIPLANTS to the Internet*

Assessing and Improving Student Learning

An article by Jerry G. Gaff (*Liberal Education*, 38 (3), 12-17) was referenced in the February 1998 issue of *The Teaching Professor*. Gaff indicated that “too often the curriculum is designed by asking faculty members two questions: ? What do you want to teach next year?’ and ?Are you making any changes from this year?’ This is a supply-side approach...rather than a considered analysis of what students need to become educated individuals.”

Gaff indicates that this approach to curriculum development contributes to a fragmentation of educational experiences and higher costs. He cites two examples: U.S college students can choose from more than 500 different types of baccalaureate degrees, and one university of 11,000 students offers more than 2,400 courses--a course for every four students!

Three questions are raised: How much choice do students need in the curriculum? How much choice can an institution afford? How can we better monitor the quality and costs of the instructional program?

Gaff identified a number of trends in general education to help address those questions. Among them:

- **Higher standards, more requirements for learning that are necessary for all students, regardless of major**
- **A focus on the freshman year as a critical**

transition, with the development of new supports to ensure greater chances of success

· A focus on the senior year, expecting

students to pull together their learning and demonstrate their abilities

- **An expectation that students will integrate knowledge, not just master isolated bits of information**
- **An extension of general education into advanced study, rather than relegating introductory courses to hurdles that must be jumped to get to a major**
- **Designing courses that involve students in powerful new active, experiential and collaborative methods of learning**
- **Assessing learning *and* using the results to improve courses and programs**

As the University of Illinois at Urbana- Champaign embarks on important strategies to assess and improve student learning, we must move from the traditional focus on inputs to a more relevant focus on outcomes. What should an ACES graduate “look like” as a result of completing one of our 13 majors/40 options?

Can we then say that it is characteristic of this University’s graduates and students that they automatically, and without having to reflect on the expenditure of time and energy and imagination, exert themselves for the benefit of the communities?

**“The Washington & Lee Ideal” presented on Founders Day 1979
by Dean Emeritus James G. Leyburn, Lexington VA**

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