B E S T
T E A C H I N G
PRACTICES
A FACULTY COMMITTEE REPORT

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SIUC

COLLEGE OF APPLIED SCIENCES AND ARTS
SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY CARBONDALE

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INTRODUCTION

Southern at 150: Building Excellence Through Commitment, SIUC's strategic plan, states, "Our teaching must be excellent." The collective bargaining agreement approved by the SIU Board of Trustees and the Illinois Education Association states, "Students are central to the mission and very existence of the university." The faculty of the College of Applied Sciences and Arts (CASA) also places high value on students and good teaching.

But what constitutes good teaching? What are fair testing practices? What is a student-centered university? What is a legitimate class absence? How can the CASA faculty improve its teaching?

To address these and related questions in an effort to identify best teaching practices, a committee of CASA faculty members who were designated *master teachers* by their department chairs and school directors, was convened in the summer of 2005. A draft committee report was distributed to the full CASA faculty for discussion and comment, which ultimately resulted in the 2006 report. The original document was revised in 2008 by a second set of master teachers.

The teaching guidelines recommended in the report will be especially helpful to new faculty members and undoubtedly will be appreciated by more experienced faculty members. New faculty members are strongly encouraged to adopt these recommendations, as appropriate, to conduct the courses they teach.

Guidelines cover the following topics:

- Student-Centered University
- The Syllabus
- Classroom Preparation and Currency in the Field
- Delivery of Instruction
- Classroom Management
- Students Teaching Course Material
- Field Trips
- Assessment
- Attendance
- Late Assignments and Tests
- Availability Outside Class
- Textbooks, Readings, and Technology
- Personal Research, Creative Activity and Scholarly Work in the Classroom
- Papers, Plagiarism, and Writing Centers
- Instructional Materials
- Teaching Evaluation
- Safety and Security
- Creating a Positive Atmosphere for Learning

Many thanks to the committee members for their work, which represents the CASA commitment to excellence in teaching at our college and university.

Paul D. Sarvela
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STUDENT-CENTERED UNIVERSITY

A student-centered university. . .

- Has at its core the best interests of each and every student;
- Has a faculty and administration genuinely concerned with the welfare and success of students;
- Initiates policies and activities that benefit the student and the delivery of instruction;
- Integrates student views, comments and concerns in its policies and curriculum;
- Helps students recognize the university as their university;
- Recognizes that students justify the existence of the university; and
- Provides the best possible learning environment for its students.

THE SYLLABUS

The syllabus should be the first item distributed in class during the initial meeting.

The syllabus should be as specific and comprehensive as possible. A good syllabus is dynamic, it should accurately reflect the experience the student will encounter during the course. If the instructor has taught the course during a previous semester, the old

syllabus should be reviewed and updated, as required, before it is handed out to the students.

Since the syllabus represents a contract for learning, it should clearly define what is expected of the student and what the student can expect of the instructor and the instruction.

The content of the course syllabus must match the master syllabus on file with the college, school and program. Faculty can propose revisions to the master syllabus using a Form-90 to help ensure the master syllabus is up to date. If an instructor proposes revisions to a course, the entire faculty should review such revisions, since many courses impact other courses within a specific program. Revisions to the master syllabus must be approved consistent with established university policy.

The syllabus should be published online in Blackboard or as a .pdf file, where it is readily available to students.

A good syllabus includes the following:

1. Name of instructor, phone number and e-mail contacts;
2. Office hours and office location;
3. Course description and prerequisites;
4. Estimated cost of required textbooks, materials, equipment and additional items that might represent a student expense for the course;
5. The official emergency response information/procedures recommended by the University.
6. Safety related information, such as emergency numbers, building numbers, building first-aid specialists, fire extinguisher locations, eye wash stations, etc.;
7. Personal safety equipment and garments students require during class;
8. Measurable course objectives;
9. Detailed schedule of readings, assignments, and tests;
10. Suggested milestones for large projects, (e.g., for a final term paper, date for topic, date for references, date for outline, etc.);
11. Outline of requirements for major projects, (e.g., research paper must include abstract, introduction, methods, results, discussion, references, appendices, etc., and points for each);
12. Clearly defined grading criteria (e.g., breakdown of points for quizzes, tests, attendance, assignments, etc.) and what is needed to attain each final letter grade, (e.g., 100 to 90 = A, 89 to 80 = B, etc.) and any policy for contesting grades;
13. Classroom / studio / lab rules of conduct;
14. Attendance policy;
15. Any policy regarding a grade penalty system that may be in place for absence or tardiness, late projects and assignments, and other deficiencies;
16. Classroom management practices including the *rules of engagement* for the classroom;
17. University Support Services; and

18.   References to the *Student Conduct Code*, (e.g. plagiarism policy).

Some faculty members may wish to consider adopting the practice of having students sign a roster that indicates the student has read and understands the syllabus, course requirements, and guidelines necessary for them to successfully complete Course #, Course Name, Semester.

CLASSROOM PREPARATION AND CURRENCY IN THE DISCIPLINE

Instructors should attend seminars and workshops to stay current in their fields. Professional development is vital to increase and maintain instructor credibility and effectiveness. Instructors may also benefit from honing their skills on how to deliver information in a variety of ways as it relates to students' individual learning style.

Instructors should practice what they teach in a professional setting to continue to gain and maintain professional proficiency and experiences that they can share with students.

Participation in professional organizations and activities provide information as well as a network of professional individuals who are potential assets and resources.

New Faculty members should review syllabus objectives and prepare a tentative teaching timeline for each course. Be prepared to adapt and present additional course content, in the event students cover material much faster than anticipated. Prepare, prepare, and prepare for class!

Instructors should remember that students view faculty as experts in their fields. It should be no surprise, for example, when instructors receive telephone calls from graduates and industry professionals seeking expert advice.

In many courses throughout the College acquisition and maintenance of laboratory equipment is essential to the attainment of course objectives. Acquiring and implementing state-of-the-art equipment for use in laboratory exercises is key to providing instruction that is current in regard to industry practices.

DELIVERY OF INSTRUCTION

There should be an overall plan for the entire course as outlined in the syllabus, with each class session accomplishing a portion of the plan. Organization and preparation enhance learning for the student and provide the structure and efficiency that is necessary for effective teaching. A well organized classroom session promotes structure, efficiency and productivity. Organized classroom sessions that are productive and relevant will be greatly appreciated by the student. Some class schedule deviations may be unavoidable, but should be kept to a minimum and cleared with your school or department.

Prior to any lecture or demonstration period, students need to be informed of the pertinent objectives/goals of that activity and the relevance of the activity to their major. A good syllabus can provide the topic and readings for the day and serve as an organized plan for the student.

Students should be allowed to actively participate in hands-on instructional activities and problem solving, as well as interactive discussions, to the greatest extent possible. "The important role of thinking, problem solving, and reasoning in individual learning and performance has been a priority of training for decades (Johnson & Chung, 1999, ¶ 7). Students learn from talking about the topic and doing activities with fellow students. Active and creative assignments that require student interaction, discussions of problems, and alternative ways to solve a problem are a valuable method of teaching (Felder & Silverman, 1988). These types of interactive student activities should be encouraged in a course whenever possible. Complex operations may require repeated operations, or practice, to achieve specified skill levels.

Although every teacher develops his or her own blend of instructional methods, class sessions must be relevant and provide students with the knowledge and skills needed to be successful in the course and on the job.

Anticipating, preventing and combating student boredom are among the more difficult tasks facing the instructor. The means by which instructional materials are delivered should be as varied as possible. Videos, digital presentations, guest speakers, field trips and overhead projections should be used to the extent possible. Electronic media are popular methods of communicating instruction. However, clear communication of instruction can be achieved equally well using a chalkboard, overhead transparency, film strip, movie, etc.

Instructors should develop their own style of teaching and become comfortable with it. Electronic delivery using a PowerPoint presentation, for example, is acceptable, but a properly delivered lecture with a solid knowledge base can be just as effective.

Students of the cell phone generation should understand that all subjects and tasks are not necessarily enjoyable. Learning is hard work and requires dedication and commitment from the student and instructor. Make the learning experience as pleasant as possible, but know that some subjects remain difficult and tedious challenges for all parties involved. Students must be made to understand that they must do the learning. No one else may learn for the learner. In this sense, learners have a major responsibility in the education process. Education is like weight-lifting in that you get out of it what you put into it.

Regardless of delivery method, focus on clarity and relevance of instruction.

Instructors will find the following to be a beneficial approach to use for each instructional period.

1. Tell the students what you are going to tell them,
2. Tell them, and
3. Tell them what you told them.

A simple, yet effective, formula for organizing course material is to design the instructional units to take students…

1. from what they know to what they don't know,
2. from the simple to the complex, and
3. from the general to the specific.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Instructors should be on time for class; early if possible to set up PowerPoint Presentations, greet students, organize demonstrations, etc. Class should begin on time and instructors should be direct, honest and passionate about their roles as educators. Instructors should never fake it, or be unprepared for class, because students can see through the façade. Instructors should not ask anything of the students they are not prepared to effectively, efficiently and correctly demonstrate or explain. Instructors should have a sense of humor and enjoy the challenges of teaching. They should also be serious and stern, when needed, and maintain a professional demeanor during class and other periods of interaction with students.

Through sincere actions, conduct and interpersonal communication skills, instructors should strive to convince students that they are genuinely happy and excited to be in an educational partnership with the students. This means, among other things, making a genuine effort to learn student's names and understand any apprehensions they may have about the course and the material to be covered.

Instructors should be fair, objective and consistent in administering class policies and evaluating student performance, and do for any single student only what they are willing to do for all students in similar situations.

There are so many things in every field to talk about, to show and to discuss with students that allotted class time is never sufficient. Therefore, instructors should not waste time or employ stalling tactics to compensate for lack of preparation. Nor should they waste class time on inappropriate material or activities. Be over-prepared for each instructional session.

Instructors must be teachers, coaches, showmen, policemen and friends to students. They should remember those terrible, boring lecturers they hated in college and graduate school, and make certain their lectures are not among them.

Faculty are allowed a great deal of flexibility, which can be considered a gift or a curse. Many faculty take advantage of this flexibility to develop exciting and intriguing classroom activities and lectures. Other faculty members unfortunately will try to get through classes as quickly as possible. The best professors will use the complete class time and cover relevant material in an organized fashion. They will cover the material in a manner that will help students retain the information.

Instructors should appreciate humor and wit in the classroom and enjoy working with students, but must maintain firm and consistent control at all times.

STUDENTS TEACHING COURSE MATERIAL

The Best Practices in Teaching Committee does not support students teaching students as the primary source of instruction. The instructor is and must remain the person solely responsible for teaching course material. Nothing should diminish this responsibility.

Student delivered class presentations are appropriate as a course activity, but actual instruction is the responsibility of the teacher. Students should not be denied quality instruction by substituting student presentations for prepared, faculty-delivered lectures. Under some circumstances, student led instruction may be more acceptable at the graduate level. However, the faculty member has the in-depth knowledge of the subject matter and the practical experience to share; undergraduate students are simply not qualified to provide high level instruction.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips represent an excellent opportunity to strengthen and reinforce student learning. However, faculty members should exercise caution and ensure the field trip is relevant to the subject matter being discussed in the classroom. Faculty members are also advised to discuss department/school/college policies regarding field trips with their respective department chairperson.

ASSESSMENT

Examinations and tests should be directly based on instruction and readings, or other forms of instruction, such as computer based instruction and classroom and laboratory experiences. Non-lecture forms of instruction should be clearly specified in the course syllabus. In general, it is best to test only material covered in class, laboratory exercises, and assignments.

Depending on the subject, material covered and the nature of the course will dictate the type of exam. Exam formats can include, but are not limited to multiple-choice, short answer, fill in the blank and essay questions. Various majors throughout the college may require hands-on exams in a clinical, lab or studio setting. The instructor should determine the best method of testing based on the particular discipline

Without a doubt, a quality test is difficult to develop. A new test may be loaded with tricky questions that make sense to the author, but might lead students down the wrong path simply because of wording. On the other hand, a seasoned test might include

questions that aren't addressed adequately in newer textbooks or that are dropped from classroom lectures.

There are a variety of ways by which faculty can adjust test results based on student scores. Some may drop high and low scores and then create a bell curve, where the top of the bell equates to a "C". Others throw out questions that a large percentage of students miss. If a large number of students miss an item, then one or more of the following has happened:

1. The material was not covered properly in the lecture;
2. The textbook(s), laboratory project(s), and/or class assignment(s) did not properly cover the material.
3. The test question or response options were poorly worded;
4. The test key was incorrect;
5. The students did not learn the material;
6. The item was extremely difficult

Please note that the majority of the six problems are not related to students, so give them a break and throw the item out of the test when appropriate.

Another testing method instructors may wish to consider is retaking the test. If students are given a second chance to correct errors made during the test, chances are they will re-study the material and gain a deeper understanding for the topic. However, students should receive no more than partial credit for questions they get correct the second time as it would otherwise be unfair to students who got it correct the first time.

The instructor should return graded tests and other assigned material to students as quickly as possible, preferably at the next class session. Students should have a good idea of how many points they have in a class and to what letter grade that equates throughout the semester.

Testing should reflect course objectives and instruction provided in class. Otherwise, testing undermines the effectiveness of the class and leaves students feeling frustrated and confused regarding instructors' expectations.

ATTENDANCE

The Committee places a premium on classroom attendance and punctuality, and recommends that every syllabus includes an attendance policy that clearly outlines attendance expectations, specifies percentage of grade related to attendance and details penalties for unexcused absence and tardiness.

Missing class because of a death in the family, personal illness or injury, the illness or injury of a child and military obligations are examples of excused absences. Instructors should exercise common sense and good judgment with respect to student attendance and should be flexible when possible.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS AND TESTS

Unless there are legitimate extenuating circumstances, the Committee supports point penalties for late assignments, projects and exams as defined in the course syllabus.

AVAILABILITY OUTSIDE CLASS

Since SIUC is a student-centered university, faculty members should schedule office hours at different times on different days to accommodate students' schedules and obligations.

Students who have difficulty visiting a faculty member during scheduled office hours should be permitted to schedule appointments at other times. Students who are quiet in class for whatever reason often find office visits highly productive and enjoy the individualized attention. Students must be able to consult with faculty to clarify lecture points, ask about lab projects or just get to know faculty better.

Faculty should provide e-mail addresses and phone numbers to students, and should return all the phone calls and answer e-mails as quickly as possible. Faculty should take calls when in their offices and not permit calls to be routed to answering machines or voice mail.

TEXTBOOKS, READINGS AND TECHNOLOGY

If instructors require students to purchase textbooks (which should always reflect current theory, knowledge and practices), they should be used thoroughly: preferably cover to cover. If necessary, instructors should supplement the contents of the assigned textbook(s) with pertinent course material. Readings and handouts collated in a three-ring student binder are very effective, but their use and distribution must not violate copyright statutes.

Depth of knowledge and understanding is often improved when multiple teaching/learning techniques are employed during the lesson (e.g., learn the material then use the knowledge). Try to accommodate as many learning styles as possible. Newer technologies for teaching provide students with different media from which to learn and study. PowerPoint presentations can be uploaded to the web for students to review, for example.

Students can have many different learning styles and learn in many ways. According to Felder and Silverman (1988), what students learn not only depends on the individual's experiences and ability, "but also the compatibility of his or her learning style and the instructor's teaching style" (¶ 1). Some students are better auditory learners and can

learn by simply listening to a lecture. Most college age students are visual learners, and need to see information in the form of words, diagrams, and pictures to be able to understand it. In best teaching practices, a combination of both auditory and visual course presentations can benefit both types of learning (Felder & Silverman). Also, many students are *hands-on* or active learners and learn best by doing. Engaging students singularly or in groups to accomplish problem solving tasks is an effective teaching method for these learners.

Blackboard is free for students and faculty, and allows the instructor to:

- Develop online quizzes;
- Display digital videos, PowerPoint presentations and images;
- Provide a virtual calendar;
- Create a forum related to the course; and
- Provide the students with their grades and progress in the course.

Technology is a tool which can be used in the classroom to complement learning but it should not take the place of the teacher.

PERSONAL RESEARCH, CREATIVE ACTIVITY AND SCHOLARLY WORK IN THE CLASSROOM

The credibility of instructional content and respect for the instructor in the classroom are paramount in maintaining students' confidence. Preparation in the field is an essential factor in establishing this credibility. Preparation, however, does not necessarily mean formal work experience within the subject field.

Research for publication and personal growth within the subject area can be very effective in enhancing instruction in the classroom. For example, if a faculty member is presenting a new course or a significant addition to an existing course, the faculty member should collect data on student performance, perceptions, learning styles, etc., as related to the new material.

Professional research projects showing the relationship between research and instruction should be integrated in the classroom to the greatest extent possible. Such integration adds to faculty credibility. Many students enjoy reading journal articles written by their professors.

Research is an important component of teaching, and faculty may wish to consider involving students in research projects.

PAPERS, PLAGIARISM, AND WRITING CENTERS

Evaluating a student's writing ability is as important as giving exams over the material learned. Classes that are not considered "writing intensive" should still have a

component that evaluates a student's writing ability including both in and out of class assignments.

Students should have a basic understanding of what plagiarism is and how to avoid common mistakes that can lead to plagiarizing another person's work. Unfortunately, plagiarism is an activity that we are all susceptible to. Faculty members should exercise caution and avoid the perception of plagiarism. The Committee recommends that faculty review the university plagiarism policy and review it annually for currency.

Students should have a working knowledge of grammar, spelling and the English language prior to coming to college, but it is ultimately the instructor's responsibility to make sure students are writing at a college level.

Faculty members should make the students aware of the availability of the writing centers on campus. These centers are for students that struggle with putting together a well-written paper, essay or report.

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS AND TOOLS

<u>Tools/Instruments</u>

Students should either be provided with or have obtained the basic tools and instruments required to assist the learning process, whether it be for a lab, practical exercise, studio setting or clinic. With this comes the responsibility of the faculty member to be fluent in the design, uses and possibly dangers of the tools and instruments. These obviously vary from program to program, but tools and instruments in working order and knowledge of their usage is fundamental to teaching hands-on exercises that are essential for job training.

<u>Computers</u>

Computers are the backbone of a technologically advanced society, basic training on computers and availability of computers in the individual disciplines is a key component for training in preparation for the job market. Computer learning is a basic staple for architecture, but should be incorporated into all classes that will require the student to have hands-on knowledge of computer applications before entering the job market.

<u>Supplies</u>

Supplies are an essential component to most lab, clinic, and studio setting. If there are lab fees for particular class sessions these fees should be used to provide students with the necessary items that are job essential. Supplies should be maintained by the instructor and monitored for proper usage, handling and disposal.

ICE process (student perceptions)

The content and delivery of academic knowledge and skills needs to be evaluated by the students themselves during the course of the semester. This process is the instructional course evaluation. This is required of all courses that are taught in the College of Applied Sciences and Arts.   Usually this is completed during the latter part of the semester when the student has a grasp of the content and delivery of the course. It is always prudent to disseminate the ICE documents via another instructor or staff member. Information of the process and results can be obtained at:

http://www.lib.siu.edu/departments/iss/instructionalevaluationpanel

Mentor

The CASA new-faculty mentoring program is designed to support new tenure-track faculty as they acclimate to the SIUC campus and the southern Illinois community. Modeled on successful programs at other universities, the program's primary goal is to encourage new faculty members to begin immediately to develop their skills in the three domains of academic life: ***teaching, research, and service***. Professional advancement in these areas will benefit the students, the College, the University, the respective discipline, and, of course, the faculty member as well.

http://www.siu.edu/~asa/facultyMentoringManual.htm

Peer observations

One of the most effective methods of teaching review and improvement is peer observation. Please review the following article, Developing Higher Education Teaching Skills Through Peer Observation and Collaborative Reflection. This document is available at: http://pdfserve.informaworld.com/459877_731232360_746773124.pdf

Direct student to teacher dialogue

Last but not least in the improvement of teaching is direct student to teacher dialogue. Please review: Learning as dialogue: The dependence of learner autonomy on teacher autonomy.

http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob=ArticleURL&_udi=B6VCH-3YCMKN1-M&_user=1412102&_rdoc=1&_fmt=&_orig=search&_sort=d&view=c&_version=1&_urlVersion=0&_userid=1412102&md5=97420673f96836c378ccdd7abc9b3aa8

This article is concerned with learner autonomy in formal language learning contexts (schools, colleges and universities). It begins with some general reflections on the nature of learner autonomy and goes on to consider how autonomy is to be fostered, focusing

first on learning strategies and learner training and then on the pedagogical dialogue and the role of the teacher. It argues that while learning strategies and learner training can play an important supporting role in the development of learner autonomy, the decisive factor will always be the nature of the pedagogical dialogue; and that since learning arises from interaction and interaction is characterized by interdependence, the development of autonomy in learners presupposes the development of autonomy in teachers. The article concludes by briefly summarizing the implications of this argument for teacher education.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

Preparing for an emergency gives you the knowledge, skills, and confidence necessary to handle emergency situations wherever they arise--at work, at home, or on the soccer field. If an emergency does arise, you will be better prepared to act. Knowledge and skills can be likewise divided into general and specific. Having knowledge of the building floor plan is useful in any emergency whereas where to go during a tornado is specific knowledge useful only for severe weather. The following website details the Emergency procedures for the following: Appropriate behavior, Disruptive behavior, Hostile behavior and Weather.

 http://mcma.siu.edu/bert/#2

Faculty should consider carrying a cell phone to class and require students to place their cell phones in the vibrate mode during class – allowing for rapid contact of campus police if necessary. Students should be instructed to include in their phone directories telephone number for the city and campus police departments, the ambulance service, and the fire department, in addition to 911

 Sexual Harassment

Faculty members should maintain a friendly, but professional, relationship with students. Inappropriate gestures and statements may be interpreted by a student or colleague as an act of sexual harassment. Behavior of this type is unacceptable in a learning or work environment. Please see the proposed sexual harassment policy for concerns dealing with harassment.

http://www.siu.edu/~facsenat/SHPolicy.pdf

CREATING A POSITIVE ATMOSPHERE FOR LEARNING

There are several other components of effective teaching that are extremely important. One is to create a positive atmosphere that encourages learning. Learning can be fun and fulfilling. The joy of learning and the mastery of knowledge for the teacher can be

contagious for students. Every student has worth and value and, with assistance, will achieve the prescribed degree of success. All instructors should be listeners and provide assistance when necessary. Teachers should be flexible and keep in mind that what works for one student may not work for another.

Instructors need to laugh in certain situations; even if it means laughing at themselves occasionally. Even instructors make mistakes and do not know everything. Instructors should be the first to admit this to their students and they should understand that imperfection makes them human. They should further attempt to find answers to questions students have that are beyond the knowledge level of the instructor at the moment the questions are asked.

Teachers should be motivators, coaches, and, sometimes, disciplinarians. Teachers can develop a relationship with students fostering mutual admiration and respect. Instructors should applaud students for their achievements and challenge them when they seem to be slacking off.

Instructors should be flexible — ready to alter the way something is taught — with the understanding that there may be a better way.

Students should be encouraged to participate in student organizations. Such entities generally undertake industry-related activities. Students involved in professional organizations not only form friendships with colleagues, they get opportunities to network with industry professionals and local citizens. Student organizations also assist their affiliated disciplines with special activities (e.g., open houses, summer camps, etc.). Students, whether or not they belong to student organizations, should be encouraged to foster a spirit of volunteerism within their discipline and communities.

Faculty should encourage students to become members of professional organizations and to maintain membership after graduation. This is one way to remain current with respect to trends in practice and education.

The best part of an instructor's job is working with students!

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