

Teaching Philosophy

Donald Tavares

Teaching is the cornerstone of my professional life. It is my passion. I view my students as the important and integral part of my professional existence and so I welcome them and I respect them.

Students take courses for a variety of reasons. Often, a primary reason is to satisfy requirements needed to get a diploma or degree. Quantitative courses, particularly when offered in a school of business management in which I teach, often fall into this category. I take it as a challenge therefore, to try to arouse in my students, a keenness for what I teach so that they will have a lifelong understanding of it and interest in it.

My objective in teaching is to engage the students beyond the realm of passing a course; to impart to them an appreciation for the elegance of the discipline and the concepts; to have them comprehend its usefulness and application in areas of life beyond the parameters of a business diploma or degree.

To realize this objective, my classroom teaching techniques are student centred, which means that the students' comprehension drives and paces the lectures. To me, "that the student understands" is of the utmost importance. To this end my teaching method is "immediate feedback" oriented which is interactive.

Rather than just lecturing one way, my classroom presentations are regularly interspersed, enlivened and punctuated by questions by me to the students and to me by the students. In an atmosphere of keen and genuine enquiry, students are urged and encouraged to actively participate in the process of their learning. Students' answers and questions provide immediate feedback which point to their areas of weaknesses which help fine tune my direction in bridging the gaps in their knowledge of the material. At all times, in addition to my classroom efforts I impress upon my students the importance of them doing their part, which is to study sufficiently. I remind them of Benjamin Franklin's observation: By failing to prepare you are preparing to fail.

To teach effectively preparedness is essential. And it is paramount when one is teaching quantitative subjects such as statistics, mathematics and computing as I do. For me preparedness in teaching means not only having a thorough knowledge of the material being taught and using every means available (audio, visual, computer graphics, handouts and even designing one's own computer programs) to provide interest, clarity and understanding. More than that for me preparedness means putting oneself in the students' position, imagining oneself with the overall knowledge base and life experience of the particular students and gearing the explanations, examples and visuals to them accordingly.

The progression from topic to topic is made when I am satisfied that the overwhelming majority have understood what is being taught. This is facilitated by using the "immediate feedback" method described above, wherein through lively interactive exchanges of questions and answers during lectures I learn what students have learned or need to learn more.

The regular dialogs with students in the classroom lectures are stimulating and very enjoyable to me and I hope always that they are for my students as well. That surely is my aim! I firmly believe that by actively participating in the process of my teaching them, students become partners with me in instilling in themselves critical thinking, clarity of concepts and my greatest hope, a quest for lifetime learning not only of my subjects but all else.