

“To educate as the practice of freedom is a way of teaching that anyone can learn. That learning process comes easiest to those of us who teach who also believe that there is an aspect of our vocation that is sacred; who believe that our work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students. To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin.” - (bell hooks, *Teaching To Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*)

When I reflect on my own teachers and those that had the most profound impact on my education, I am struck by their ability to challenge my assumptions and beliefs while exposing me to new ways of conceptualizing the world around me. Teachers that taught me to think, not how to think; to question and critique while creating solutions helped me to become the professional and teacher that I am. They are the teachers that inspired me to help create positive change and support others.

My education and experiences as an educator, administrator, facilitator and coach have focused on leadership and faculty development in higher education. Through the study of best practices in pedagogy and networking with other faculty I have developed a strong learner centered orientation. Centering the learner in building curricula and lesson plans guides my educational practice through the diversity of every semester, course, and learner. Recognizing that all learners bring experiences and knowledge to the classroom, I work to build experiences that capitalize on the strengths my students bring to the classroom.

I strive to build my curricula and courses on student engagement and active learning. By consistently remaining focused on adult learning principles, I design course activities around developing a student’s autonomy and encourage my students to discover and apply new information through the cycle of experience, understanding, reflection, implementation and transformation. Having taught courses in history and culture as well as business administration, I find that making students responsible for what and how they learn empowers students and leads to transformative learning experiences.

To engage students a combination of theory, research and practice must inform learning. Students thrive when they are able to apply experience to research and theory then reinforce concepts through practice. This heightens students’ ability to synthesize and retain information. I work to curate instructional support materials that help students to relate and reinforce course concepts through various media. Providing students with multiple sources and diverse persons discussing course topics helps students develop deeper understanding of course topics and hopefully inspires deeper investigation.

I build in consistent opportunity for assessment with students. I give students the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of course concepts to ensure that scaffolding has taken place before we advance through course materials. Students should have multiple opportunities to receive and apply formative feedback. These assessments are used not only to gauge student

understanding but also to improve and refine course delivery. I encourage critical course feedback regarding the design and delivery of the course. Students appreciate organized, approachable, and transparent instructors. Therefore, I treat my students as partners in their educational journey incorporating their feedback and seeking answers to questions that I am not prepared to answer. As a professional I take this as an opportunity to also teach my students continuous improvement and learning.

I am a continuous learner. I treat every mistake or shortcoming as an opportunity to learn and improve. I am inspired by my students and appreciate reciprocal relationships where we hold each other accountable. Being a teacher is a process of constant evolution as I learn more about various teaching methodologies and techniques, encounter different learners, and consistently reflect on the impact of my teaching experiences. As a teacher I do not fear situations in which I do not know enough to teach my students, but a situation where I do not learn enough to walk with my students through their educational journey.