



7 Strategies for Enlisting Experts

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Years ago, as a high school graduate applying for a college scholarship, I (Tanya) tried an innovative research strategy. I was investigating the case of a Canadian man who was questionably convicted of murder. I decided to call his mother and ask about the defense's evidence. She answered all my questions and sent a box of materials that convinced me of his innocence. I won the scholarship, and years later, after 23 years in jail, David Milgaard was freed. Now I find my boldness amazing, but I learned a lesson we've both applied in our teaching. **A lot can happen when you dare to ask an expert.**

Instructors do a lot of research, but seldom do we go straight to the source, even though incorporating innovative sources offers students memorable learning opportunities. It invites multidisciplinary involvement, as well. Here are some things we have dared to do:

- Tracked down the writer of an article that was being discussed in an English course, and asked about his writing process and thesis. Several email exchanges with the author were shared with the class, bringing a new and lively dimension to the discussion. The author was invited to "attend" the class via teleconference, but he had to decline because of prior commitments.
- Invited local collectors to bring their original "Model T" cars to our college to discuss assembly line production with students in both an introductory sociology and a mechanics course.

- Called a local couple who were married in a doughnut shop. They provided copies of their wedding pictures, which were incorporated into a PowerPoint presentation on the social life of doughnut shops.
- Held a teleconference with a New York writer of a just-published true-crime book. The call was teleconferenced with an English class at one campus and a criminology class at another.

For those who have never before tried such techniques, it may feel daunting. But our experience has been just the opposite. Few of the experts and primary sources we've contacted have said no, and most have given even more than asked of them. Specific strategies we have found useful include the following:

- **Use the Internet and directory assistance.** Narrow your search to find the person's email address or office phone number. It's worth the time because you contact the person directly. We've found that experts will respond to a brief email more quickly than to a phone message.
- **Be specific.** When making arrangements, it's always best to state up front what kind of information you are looking for. Are you looking for a guest speaker, responses to a set of questions, a copy of a specific resource, or personal opinion on an issue? The more specific the request, the more likely the person will honor your request.
- **Work together.** If your department doesn't have enough of a budget to cover an honorarium, see if you can combine with other departments to make it feasible.
- **Think big.** Ask multiple experts the

same question. You might end up with a panel!

- **Use an intermediary.** A publicist at a publishing house or a secretary can be a powerful ally in prioritizing your request.
- **Make the expert accessible to learners.** Let students formulate questions for the expert, as well as encourage them to go directly to sources by using online contact links such as "Ask an Expert" websites.
- **Don't give up.** Sometimes you have to find the information or contact the expert in a different way.

Our students have found these events memorable—the highlight of a semester course. Follow up with a thank-you card signed by the members of the class, and publicize your success through your school newsletter, bulletin board, or Listserv. **Dare to ask the expert,** and let students benefit from your boldness. ♥

In This Issue

Faculty and Diversity-Related Course Content	2
Teaching Problem Solving:	
A Case with Intriguing Results	3
10 Articles that Sustain me	4
Small Group Discussion Tasks	5
Strategies to Enhance Video Use in the College Classroom	6
Three Years and Counting	7
Alignment: A Model that Responds to Teaching Tensions	8



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- Write directly to the audience, remembering that this is a newsLETTER.
- Keep the article short; generally between 2 and 3 double-spaced pages.
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Faculty and Diversity-Related Course Content

Experience and evidence now confirm that, when present, material that highlights differences does have positive effects on a number of learning outcomes. Control of the curriculum remains in faculty hands—both collectively, in terms of course and program approval processes, and individually, in terms of daily decisions about what to teach. As a result, the success of efforts to make curricula more diverse depends to a large degree on faculty willingness to incorporate these materials.

One study of faculty at Research I institutions (cited in the article referenced below) found that the majority of faculty endorsed diversity, seeing it as helping students achieve the goals of a college education, but the majority of this group also reported making no changes in their classroom practices.

It would be helpful to know why faculty aren't changing what they teach, which was the purpose of the study. These researchers studied faculty at one, predominantly white, public university located in the Midwest—a university that “has struggled with creating an environment that welcomes and appreciates diversity.” (p. 152) The study's dependent variable was determined by a yes or no response to this question: “In the past year, have you incorporated content designed to promote sensitivity toward diversity issues in your courses?” (p. 155) Sixty-nine percent of the sample said yes; 31 percent responded no.

Some demographic and professional characteristics of those faculty who did and did not make changes in course content were predictable. Faculty of color, both males and females, as well as other marginalized groups such as gays, were more likely than white faculty of both genders to include diversity-related content. More surprising, faculty in education were less likely to include diversity content than faculty from the arts and sciences, business, and fine arts, and faculty from engineering were more likely to teach diversity than faculty in these other fields. Tenure status

and time at the institution did not reliably predict who made curricular changes.

Also interesting was the fact that in this study faculty decisions about diversity content were more significantly influenced by climate for diversity in their department than the broader institutional environment.

As for beliefs that predict which faculty will and will not incorporate diversity, one of the three variables tested was significant. On average, if faculty were more likely to agree that “affirmative action leads to hiring of less qualified faculty and staff” (p. 161), then those faculty were less likely to incorporate diversity-related content in course materials. It turned out that for these faculty, some experiences, such as participation in activities (such as workshops) that aimed to increase faculty sensitivity toward diversity, did powerfully predict those who reported making changes. Based on this finding, the researchers recommend that administrators consider inducements like release time and stipends to encourage more faculty to participate in these kinds of events.

This research has implications for those in institutions charged with growing curricular diversity, but it also ought to be considered by individual faculty. These findings should encourage us to examine the reasons that do and do not motivate us to include diversity-related content in the courses we teach. They raise those persistent questions about what content and how much of it is needed to advance the learning goals of our disciplines and of the larger college experience.

Reference: Mayhew, M. J. and Grunwald, H. E. (2006). Factors contributing to faculty incorporation of diversity-related course content. *Journal of Higher Education*, 77(1), 148–168. 🍀

Teaching Problem Solving: A Case with Intriguing Results

Those in math and science are especially committed to teaching their students good problem-solving skills. They do so believing that those habits of the mind will enable students to successfully solve problems for years to come. Additionally, most science teachers now recognize that students do not acquire these skills as well by osmosis, by simply being in the presence of a problem solver who uses them. They need to be taught the skills explicitly, and then they need the opportunity to practice those skills repeatedly. This way, effective problem-solving skills become habituated—a fixed part of how students approach every problem.

A classroom experiment (citation below) explored these premises and came up with some surprising results. Using both control and treatment groups in the same introductory, non-calculus-based, mechanics physics course (one taken by both science and non-science majors), students were introduced to a problem-solving strategy well established in the science education literature. It involves the following five steps (p. 43):

1. Systematically tabulating all known values in a given problem, together with their units, in the left-hand margin of the paper
2. Below the known variables, symbolically identifying all of the problem's unknowns, together with their units
3. Sketching the physical situation, relating the known and unknown variables
4. Writing the governing equation below the sketch
5. After substituting quantities into the developed solution, performing a dimensional analysis checking for unit consistency

In the control group, students received an outline detailing this problem-solving strategy, and early in the course the instructor demonstrated it using several problems. In the treatment group, this approach to problem-solving was empha-

sized in a number of different ways throughout the course: the instructor modeled it, explicitly naming and labeling the steps (instructor use of a particular step diminished as evidence that students were using it emerged); students were rewarded when they used the strategy on homework assignments; and prompts reminding students of the strategy appeared in varying forms on the exams. The experiment was repeated across three different semesters in two sections of the course with virtually all aspects of the course (content, text, assignments, exams, and instructor) kept constant.

Researchers used collected data to answer three questions. First, **could they change student approaches to problem solving? Could they get students to use these five steps?** Using a systematic analysis explained in the article, they determined that between 53 and 66 percent of the students in the treatment group were using the approach on their final exam. However, students used each of the five steps to varying degrees. Both groups used steps three and four most often. Step five's dimensional analysis was used least often—by only 33 percent of the treatment group on the final and not at all by the control group. Despite extensive use of this step by professional scientists and engineers, a fact repeatedly pointed out to students in the treatment group, in their comments, students saw no benefit to using this step. However, the research team did conclude that their approach was relatively successful at getting students to use this process when problem solving.

Second, **could researchers change student attitudes toward a given problem-solving approach?** Here the results were not promising. Of them, the research team writes, “The question of whether or not we could produce change in students’ attitudes through our behavioral modification method did not produce encouraging results. Exit surveys revealed that as the subject matter became increasingly more difficult, and as homework and test prob-

lems grew more complex, the time constraint imposed by full implementation of the strategy was just too much of a deterrent for students.” (p. 46)

And finally, perhaps most important, researchers wanted to know, **does the use of the prescribed problem-solving approach enhance student achievement?** And here the results are most surprising. “A t-test. . .revealed no statistically significant differences existed between the control group and treatment group on any of the four performance-base exams.” (p. 47) This finding is reported even though 54 percent of the treatment group used some portion of the recommended strategy on the final. The researchers wonder if perhaps the benefits are accrued more long term. They are conducting a follow-up inquiry.

Findings from one study do not justify abandoning well-established problem-solving strategies or compromise the value of working to develop these important habits of the mind. But this study does raise lots of interesting questions and should cause those who attempt to teach problem solving approaches to consider the effectiveness of those efforts. The study also reminds us what a significant role student attitudes play in the learning process.

Reference: DiLisi, G. A., Eulbert, J. E., Lanese, J. F., & Padovan, P. (2006). Establishing problem-solving habits in introductory science courses. *Journal of College Science Teaching*, 35(5), 42–47. 🍀

10 Articles that Sustain Me

Someone asked me at the recent *Teaching Professor* Conference how many articles on teaching and learning I may have read. I can't imagine. We've been publishing *The Teaching Professor* newsletter for almost 20 years now, and for every issue I read a gaggle of pieces in my search to find the best ones to highlight. I have a four-drawer filing cabinet in my office into which I cannot cram another file—it's a good thing many of the articles now exist in electronic formats. I have read a lot.

And I do have an evolving collection of favorites. These are not necessarily the articles I would point to as the best examples of pedagogical scholarship; rather, they are the articles that sustain me as a teacher. I keep them in a smudged and tattered file folder and regularly read them with pencil in hand. Passages are underlined, starred, and linked with arrows; short comments, questions, and exclamation marks fill the margins. Some of the articles contain important reminders, some admonitions, some good advice, some inspiration, and some are models. I suppose you could describe the collection as a kind of teaching philosophy, cut and pasted from the ideas of others. I don't really have a problem with that—so much of what we do and believe as teachers is “borrowed” from others.

I've decided to share current favorites. I'm not going public because I think this is the definitive collection of good articles. Rather, it's my growing realization that tracking down what keeps us going as teachers is an important endeavor. I'm convinced we underestimate the emotional energy good teaching requires. We put Band-Aids on problems of burnout and stress and are surprised when short breaks don't heal those wounds.

Ultimately, I hope sharing my collection will motivate you to read more. You need to find your own favorites and add to or update your current collection. I think you'll discover, as I have, that companions like these put those hard teaching days and years in perspective.

Black, K. A. (1993). What to do when you stop lecturing: Become a guide and a resource. *Journal of Chemical Education*, 70(2), 140–144.

Even though the author is a chemist writing about organic chemistry, this is the article that convinced me that I could trust students to take more responsibility for course content—that I should let students take an active role in figuring what about the material they didn't understand. I read it whenever I find myself falling back into to the teaching-as-telling mode.

Felder, R. M., & Brent, R. (1996). Navigating the bumpy road to student-centered instruction. *College Teaching*, 44(2), 43–47.

Students resist approaches to teaching that put the responsibility for learning squarely on their shoulders. Some protest verbally; more do it nonverbally. Either way the response is an eloquent castigation of what the teacher is trying to accomplish. I love this article for its practical, concrete suggestions. I've tried them all and they work. Here's a piece that tells you what to do when students don't want to go to those places where they will likely learn the most.

Van Gelder, T. (2005). Teaching critical thinking: Some lessons from cognitive science. *College Teaching*, 53(1), 41–46.

This is a how-to piece. I don't have many articles like this in my folder. Much of the how-to-teach material fixes and makes trivial the dynamic complexities of teaching. But this piece is an exception. Teaching students how to think critically is as noble as it is an essential goal of education, but it is damn difficult to accomplish. This article explains why, offers sensible advice on how-to, and has increased the effectiveness of my efforts to encourage good brainwork.

Pestel, B. C. (1988). Some practical distinctions between preaching, teaching, and training. *Journal of College Science*

Teaching, 18(1), 26–31.

For years, I've struggled to stop “preaching” at students. I think it's left over from my formative years when I spent much time in church. What I do is the kind of lecturing that aims to set students straight: to tell them the way things are and how the way they're going about things will not work. Pestel so eloquently explains that this is not what teaching is about. I have committed parts of this article to memory.

Hill, N. A. (1980, June 16). Scaling the heights: The teacher as mountaineer. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, p. 48.

I've always loved metaphors, and the equation of teacher with mountaineering works so well. Climbing always takes a lot of energy. Reaching new heights in dangerous terrain with inexperienced trekkers requires such leadership, such a command of technical skills, so much consistent modeling, and appreciation of the beauty and power of the mountain. This metaphor makes me move, it motivates my best performance, and it convinces me that teaching is the best work in the world.

Walck, C. L. (1997). A teaching life. *Journal of Management Education*, 21(4), 473–482.

Sometimes I read Walck and Hill back to back. Hill is all about the positive, the wonder, the thrill and joy of teaching. But not all teaching occurs there; less of it occurs there the longer we teach. Walck goes to those other places. She asks questions, challenges assumptions, and wonders if the teaching life is really worth it. Her breathtaking honesty never fails to confront me with what I'm doing and why.

Auster, C. J., & MacRone, M. (1994, October). The classroom as a negotiated social setting: An empirical study of the effects of faculty members' behavior on students' participation. *Teaching Sociology*, 22, 289–300.

Small Group Discussion Tasks

Many students don't greet with much enthusiasm teachers' efforts to have them work in groups. They may not state their objections verbally, but the nonverbal reactions are eloquent. They just sit there; only with much urging do they look at those sitting nearby and move minimally in the direction of getting themselves seated together as a group. This lack of enthusiasm is at some level a recognition that it is so much easier to sit there and write down the teacher's answers. The resistance also derives from previous experiences in groups where nothing or very little happened. Often very little happens in groups because students don't tackle the tasks with much enthusiasm—a kind of vicious cycle develops here—but group ineffectiveness may be the product of poorly designed group tasks as well. A carefully thought out, creative, and purposeful task can impact student passivity and engender much more positive feelings about group work.

A newly published second edition of a book on teaching beginning students,

Teaching First-Year College Students, by Bette La Sere Erickson, Calvin B. Peters, and Diane Welter Stommer, contains a great list of group tasks for in-class discussions. These authors propose them for beginning students, but there is no reason they would not work with more advanced learners.

- If the goal is having small groups review content from the previous class, have students compare and discuss their notes in the group and then create a list of the most important ideas contained in them. Sharing some of the lists publicly provides an effective way of linking previous material with new content.
- Before introducing a new topic: have students break into groups, put their heads together, and list everything they already know about the topic. Several of these lists can be used to introduce the topic.
- To get students ready for a whole class discussion, let them start by spending a

few minutes in a small group where people discuss any aspect of the reading assignment or discussion topic they wish.

- If the goal is to get students to ask more questions, let them generate those questions in groups. If the class is to discuss a reading assignment, let those groups come up with the one or two questions around which they think the whole class discussion should focus.
- To help students develop their problem-solving skills, give them a problem a bit more challenging than one they've just done. Let them work on solving that new problem in groups. If they can't come up with the solution, challenge the group to list the questions they need answered in order to solve the problem.
- If the goal is making sure that students understand a concept, put students in groups and have the groups define the

PAGE 7

ARTICLES

FROM PAGE 4

At the moment, I have only two studies in my collection of favorites. Research is important, but findings don't sustain my teaching life. This piece is an exception. Mostly I teach communication courses, and participation plays a vital role with this content. In a marvelously clean and neat study, Auster and MacRone (with the aid of student researchers—I love that part) identify six concrete behaviors used by teachers whose students participate more. Reviewing the list is a regular part of my preparation to teach.

McCabe, J., & Powell, B. (2004). 'In my class? No.' Professors' accounts of grade inflation. In W. E. Becker & M. L. Andrews (Eds.), *The scholarship of teaching and learning in higher education: Contributions of research universities*.

Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

In this study, faculty demonstrate a myopic view of grade inflation—"It's a problem, but not in my course." Of course, statistics included in the article document that grade inflation was a problem in those very courses. It's hard to be objective, analytical, and deeply reflective about your own practice. I don't do it enough, but the price of avoiding this necessary introspection is a set of beliefs contradicted by the practice, and an oblivious faculty member.

Noel, T. W. (2004). Lessons from the learning classroom. *Journal of Management Education*, 28(2), 188–206.

Actually I've got several analyses of failure in my folder. I have trouble confronting those days, those assignments, those courses that do not go well and those students for whom my course designs don't work well. I admire faculty who can be

objective and learn from their mistakes. I especially admire those willing to publicly share what hasn't worked, along with their thoughtful analyses of why. Noel's article models the level of reflection that gives teaching authenticity.

Gregory, M. (2005). Turning water into wine: Giving remote texts full flavor for the audience of friends. *College Teaching*, 53(3), 95–98.

Several of Gregory's articles are in my favorites folder—they contain eloquent insights and gentle humor. In this one, he writes about our propensity to teach material we love, assuming because it is so meaningful to us, it has relevance for students. In fact, it may not be relevant to students or may be relevant for very different reasons. It's an article about taking content to students and letting them find their own reasons to connect with it.

7 Strategies to Enhance Video Use in the College Classroom

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In an effort to improve instruction, educators increasingly turn to multimedia materials, such as video, to enhance student motivation and learning. However, how those media are used often determines their effectiveness.

Unlike when reading a text, students usually get only one exposure to a film. To focus viewing, promote understanding, and enhance learning, we couple videos with strategically planned viewing activities. Here's an overview of the ways we combine active learning with viewing multimedia materials.

Understanding and analyzing content

- **Traditional Viewing Guide:** Create a list of comprehension questions that match the informational sequence of a film. Give students a few minutes to study questions, start the film, and then ask students to complete the guide as they view the movie. The strategy requires students to actively respond to the material and prepares them for a richer post-viewing discussion.
- **Graphic Organizer:** Prepare a chart with topical headings, leaving empty space for students to record main ideas as they watch a movie. This strategy effectively focuses students on steps in a process, helps them organize large amounts of data, and provides a structure for analyzing relationships. For example, in Kim's Language and Literacy class, as they view the film, students complete a chart that has five rows and three columns, one row for each step in the guided reading process and three columns to record description of the step, purpose of the step, and length of time allotted for each step.

Learning through collaboration

Collaborative viewing strategies allow all students to see an entire film but require certain individuals to narrow their focus to one topic and become "experts" on one section of the film. These strategies introduce an element of choice, thereby making the task more interesting. All students actively participate, including those reticent to participate in full class discussions.

- **Collaborative Group Viewing Guide:** Divide the content of a film into five topics, list several comprehension questions under each topic, and divide the class into five groups. Each group focuses on one specific topic. After the film, each group meets for 10 minutes to discuss their topic and formulate a response. Finally, groups share information with the full class.
- **Jigsaw Viewing Guide:** Divide the content of the film into five main topics, divide the class into five home groups, and have students within each group count off one to five. Form new groups by number, that is, all number ones move and sit together to view the film and focus on topic one, all twos sit together and focus on topic two, and so forth. After the film, individuals discuss their topics and then return to home groups to teach their topic to that group instead of reporting to the full class.

Applying and synthesizing course content

- **Critical Point Variation Strategy:** Show a video to a critical point, stop the film, and pass out a graphic organizer. Students analyze events up to the point viewed and predict what comes next. Before showing the remainder of the film, discuss their predictions or examples. Then show the remainder of the film and compare their predictions with what transpired. This strategy works well with films that present problem/solution situations or define constructs followed by multiple examples.

- **Illustration and Identification Strategy:** Show a film that illustrates concepts studied in class, and ask students to identify specific examples of various constructs. For example, after students study infant development, Fay shows a film that presents seven babies interacting with their families. Each student watches a specific baby, identifies examples of behavior indicative of a specific developmental stage, and records observations on a graphic organizer. Students then share observations in a full-class discussion or collaborative group.
- **Partner Motivation Strategy:** Pair students and ask them to discuss and record their ideas on a specific topic. Show a film and ask them to meet again with their partners to compare their responses to the concepts presented in the film.

Conclusion

These strategies can be used with multimedia material in many different kinds of classes. In addition to developing critical thinking, they transform video viewing, a relatively passive activity, into a dynamic and interactive event. They focus attention on the content, increase the depth and quality of classroom discussions, and promote collaborative learning. Finally, we recommend using a question from the viewing guide on quizzes or exams to fully integrate the audiovisual elements with the text and lecture elements of the course. 🍀

Three Years and Counting

By Keith Starcher, Geneva College,
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The spring semester is over. Final grades are posted, and committee meetings are on summer hiatus. And so ends my third year, sixth semester, and 33rd month as a college faculty member. It's been an eye-opening experience for me and one that has prompted these conclusions about teaching.

Teaching is hard work

I'm embarrassed to think that in the past I made comments about how easy teachers have it. "They only work nine months a year, and when they work, they keep bankers' hours." Now I know better. Teaching is not just a job—it's a way of life. It's pouring yourself into your students, your discipline, and your pedagogy. After three years of "pouring," I am not yet running on empty, but I do sometimes feel drained. A quote from an unknown author says it best, "A good teacher is like a candle—consuming itself to light the way for others." I see what a challenge balancing consumption and rejuvenation can be.

Teaching can be lonely work

Although I relish the interaction with students both in and outside the classroom, my colleagues and I seldom seem to find the time to chat—especially about teaching. We exchange greetings, serve on committees, and line up according to tenure. But the "collegiality" that I assumed would be ubiquitous in a college setting, especially in regard to conversations about teaching, is a rarity. Everyone is just too busy teaching to talk about teaching.

Teaching has significance

I'm amazed how my students are maturing and gaining poise as they move through their college years. I remember them as freshmen—what a difference when I see them now! How humbling it is to realize the small role that I can play in this developmental process! Education leads to change. What a privilege to help engender change in the minds and hearts of students. Building a legacy in my former business life was measured in dollars and cents. Now my hoped-for legacy will be seen in changed lives. Henry Brooks Adams' words are frequently quoted; probably because they are so apt. "A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his

influence stops." What can be more significant than that?

Teaching requires continuous improvement

You would think that after three years teaching the same courses that I would have at least one course "wrapped" so to speak—a well-chosen text, effective in-class activities, challenging assignments, and outstanding assessment tools all in place. But that is not the case. I'm still changing texts, tweaking experiential learning activities, and dreaming of assessments that truly measure how well the students are realizing the course objectives. Ideas for improvement continue to flow in from all directions—from books, articles, the recent Teaching Professor Conference, and colleagues—the list goes on and on. Perhaps the joy is truly in the journey.

Teaching takes courage

Teaching is a very personal vocation. Standing in front of a class involves a level of vulnerability that I have never experienced before. I have felt the disappointment of a "bombed" lecture and the sting of a hurtful comment from a student eval-

PAGE 8

SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSIONS

FROM PAGE 5

- concept in their own words. Also have them identify an example (not one proposed in class or the reading) and be able to explain how it illustrates the concepts.
- To encourage thinking more broadly about a topic, working in groups, have students take one position on an issue and list all the arguments they can think of that support that side. When they've completed that task, have them take a different position on the same topic and list the arguments supportive of that

position.

- To help students summarize content as it is being presented, take a short break during which students compare notes with two or three people sitting near them. Have the group agree on the most important ideas presented so far. Encourage everyone to write those ideas in their notes.

Reference: Erickson, B. L., Peters, C. B., & Strommer, D. W. (2006). *Teaching first-year college students* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. [Order online at <http://josseybass.com>.]

Ed.'s note: The first edition of this book, *Teaching College Freshmen*, has proven itself an outstanding resource for those who teach first-year students. It's a book that deserves a second edition, and the new edition is both revised and elaborated. It's chock full of important information about the intellectual and social development of beginning college students as well as offers all sorts of practical instructional suggestions. The importance of first experiences in college is well known—here's a book that helps faculty make sure that rich and rewarding learning experiences are among those first encountered in college. 🍀

Alignment: A Model that Responds to Teaching Tensions

How do instructors balance demands to make courses challenging and at the same time make them accessible to students? How do instructors find a way to be informal and friendly with students at the same time they maintain proper authority and professional distance? How do instructors simultaneously meet the needs of learners who learn well in groups and those who learn better on their own? Donald Wulff believes that effective teaching rests on the ability to respond to tensions that are inherently a part of interactions between the professor, students, and context. Good teachers know how to make adjustments between competing demands—they “align” their instruction so that learning is achieved.

In Wulff’s “Alignment Model of Teaching Effectiveness” instructors use rapport, structure, engagement, and interaction to develop appropriate relationships between themselves, their content, and the students they teach. He explains how each of these are used to align the competing and sometimes conflicting demands of teaching and learning.

Rapport grows out of interpersonal communication. It creates working relationships between the instructor and students. Wulff describes it this way: “It means that instructors engage in strategies and activities that allow them to honor and celebrate their own needs, expectations, and beliefs while simultaneously respecting those of their students.” (p. 8) This is about more than “being nice” to students. “It requires ongoing thinking and adjustment to determine what kinds of relation-

ships are most appropriate to achieve learning and how instructors can best establish those relationships.” (p. 9) Ultimately, **rapport-building strategies align students and professors.**

Structure describes those efforts instructors make to organize themselves, the content, and students in relation to each other in the specific context of the course. Wulff notes here this kind of structure goes well beyond careful course planning, as important as that is. The alignment of a course on paper does not necessarily assure alignment in practice. **Effective instructors adjust the structure during the act of teaching.** As students respond to the content, they revise and adjust their plans—for that day, for an assignment, for how student learning will be assessed, or even for the whole course.

Engagement involves the use of those strategies that “stimulate student thinking, motivate students, and involve them in the instructional process.” (p. 10) Instructors need to have a range of strategies at their disposal. “All such strategies send messages to students about the importance of their involvement in their courses and **ultimately serve to align the students more fully with course content and the instructors’ preferences, needs, and expectations.**

Interaction provides feedback in this alignment model. It is what allows the instructor to make accurate adjustments. It is equally important for students who must understand that feedback in a course goes in multiple directions: from the teacher to them, from the student to the teacher, and

among students themselves. This feedback exchange enables instructors “to determine not only when they should make adjustments but also whether **they should make those adjustments to align themselves and students, content and students, or themselves and the content.**” (p. 11)

In a discussion of some of the basic tenets that underlie how this model works, Wulff offers this summary: “The dynamic nature of the teaching and learning process means that it is ever changing and constantly in need of adjustment. Thus, alignment is a lofty goal in teaching, one to which even effective instructors are always aspiring. The reality is that we never reach a point where we are able to establish alignment completely and sustain it. Even though alignment is an admirable goal, then, much of the value lies in the process of working to achieve it.” (p. 14)

Reference: Wulff, D. H. (Ed.). (2005). *Aligning for learning: Strategies for teaching effectiveness*. Bolton, MA: Anker. [Order online at www.ankerpub.com.]

Ed.’s note: Based on extensive experience working with faculty out of the Center for Instructional Development and Research (CIDR) at the University of Washington, Wulff and collaborators use his model to explore more fully the complexities of the teaching and learning process. The book offers well-organized, integrated content that challenges thinking about instructional assumptions at the same time it offers a plethora of practical advice. 🍀

THREE YEARS FROM PAGE 7

uation of my course. During those times I wonder if I’m really cut out to be a teacher. Then I get an email like this one: “Just a note to thank you for your enthusiasm

and commitment to teaching, as it showed very brightly in our class. Keep up the good work.”

And I begin afresh. I’m sure I can develop an in-class activity that will engage the students more in that business-strategy lecture. And providing clearer

directions on the industry journal would be helpful. And then there’s....

Someone once said, “There are three reasons to be a teacher—June, July, and August.” In some ways I agree—but then why am I already yearning for September? 🍀