

INTRODUCTORY BLURB for the Notebook Reinert CTE Staff

For this issue, we invited faculty members to consider the central role they play in their students' learning and to share a practical example of how that role manifests itself in the classroom. Contributors describe the role of the teacher as multifaceted, and as Dr. Ben de Foy notes in his column: constantly changing.

Experienced guide; nutrition advocate; “artistic/creative facilitator”—these are just a few of the roles our contributors inhabit when stepping into the classroom. And, as Sandy Gambill explains, we may have to rethink our teaching roles when the “classroom” is a virtual one.

In our feature article, Dr. Janet Kuebli offers a tribute to her late father, a professor who shared with her his thoughts on the multiple roles teachers play, and which she now shares with new graduate instructors. This piece sets the tone for the entire issue, describing the multidimensional roles we play, and highlighting just how grounded these roles are in the *people* we are in our lives outside of the classroom. Ultimately, to have an impact on students, teachers must not merely “play parts”—they must instead tap into authentic versions of themselves.

We hope this issue of *The Notebook* stimulates new ways of thinking about your own teaching role and gives you new insight into the ways in which your students experience you in the classroom.

REGULAR COLUMNISTS

“The Instructor as a the Experienced Guide”

Daniel Chornet-Roses, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor, Department of Communication, Madrid

Inspired by the Socratic method of question and answer, and heavily influenced by Bakhtin's framework of dialogism that strives to acknowledge diverse and competing voices, I position myself in the classroom mainly as a conductor or guide. In contrast to the traditional role of the instructor as the one who carries the weight and responsibility of the class on his/her shoulders, or what it is also known as the Atlas Complex (Finkel & Monk, 1983), the role of the instructor as a guide implicates student-centered practices. The most basic condition to be a guide in the classroom is to set up realistic outcomes and expectations. In the process of directing students towards these (be it during a class period or during the semester in general), I communicate with them in a way that motivates them to want to listen and interact with me and with each other. What triggers this kind of interaction in the classroom is a direct appeal to the position from where they speak, that is, their experiences. I usually initiate my classes with questions for students about their experiences as they relate to the specific topic for the day. Then, together we use their answers to start constructing a scaffold on the basis of which we proceed. During this stage, it is important to listen to all their examples and give them time to think about them, while making sure that they are all attuned to the conversation. In sum, I believe that in order to achieve outcomes and fulfill expectations within and outside the classroom, it is necessary that the instructor offer nurturance and support. Accordingly, the instructor as the experienced guide needs to furnish a challenging path for students to follow, and should lead the way while providing support throughout the journey.

Finkel, D. L. & Monk, S. G. (1983). Teachers and learning groups: Dissolution of the Atlas complex. In Bouton and Garth (Eds.), *Learning in groups: New directions for teaching and learning* (pp. 83-98). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

“How frustrated can you get?”

Ben DeFoy, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor, Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences

For a science lab a couple of semesters ago, I asked students to do a spreadsheet exercise to calculate how much energy we get from the sun here in Missouri. By doing this I hoped that they would understand solar radiation, develop useful Excel skills, and work on a problem relevant to current debates about renewable energy. Three birds with one stone, the students are going to love it. And if at first they don't succeed they could come to me, the teaching assistant, or their peers for help: surely a win-win scenario. After about 20 minutes, one of the students stormed out of the lab: “I'm so frustrated I can't take this anymore.”

Apparently, his mother is not a Tiger Mother, and neither is his professor¹. Maybe David Brooks is right²: he will learn more important skills by playing Frisbee with his friends than by being stuck at a terminal on a sunny spring morning. Between the response to Amy Chua's article and the reports following the publication of “Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses³,” it has been a soul-searching few weeks for educators. Thinking about my frustrated student, could I have coaxed him to stay longer? Should I have barred the exit to the classroom?

One of the challenges of teaching is that one size does not fit all: there are many roles a teacher can take, and these are continually changing. “Those who can, do; those who can't teach,” as the saying goes. But Aristotle actually said something quite different: “those who understand teach.” Understanding what a student needs may be one of the hardest things we do.

1. Why Chinese Mothers Are Superior, Amy Chua, Wall Street Journal, January 8, 2011.
2. Amy Chua Is a Wimp, David Brooks, New York Times, January 17, 2011.
3. Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses, Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa, University of Chicago Press, 2011.

“What is the Role of the Teacher in the Classroom?”

Kimberly Levenhagen, PT, DPT, WCC

Assistant Professor, Department of Physical Therapy & Athletic Training

Utilizing Ignatian Pedagogy, the teacher's primary role is to facilitate growth through context, experience, reflection, and action. As a teacher I must lay the foundation and provide opportunities for students to develop throughout their journey for further education. I believe this can be accomplished through a structured syllabus, a comfortable learning environment, and a variety of teaching methods in the classroom. The syllabus serves as a foundational road map for success in the classroom. On the first day of class, I set the tone for the semester by reviewing the key points from the syllabus. I include my expectations of the students as learners, as well as what the students should expect from me in my role as the teacher. My role is to create a

collaborative learning environment which is respectful of students' needs in and out of the classroom. I take the time to learn the students' names and their interests. If I notice a student is absent or appears confused about a concept, I will take the time to email him or her regarding opportunities to be a successful learner. It is the students' responsibility to be actively involved in the learning process; I merely provide tools to assist them in achieving this goal. In the classroom, I assist students in making connections between content and experience through role-play, case studies, reflection, and service learning. For learning to be successful, the student must be an active participant. By collaborating with their peers through alternative teaching methods, students are learning from one another through shared accomplishments and consequences of their actions. As teachers we can role model and provide the students the tools for success, but ultimately our role as teacher is to facilitate and guide the students on their exploration for truth.

FEATURED ARTICLES

“Teaching Roles: Chef Advocate”

Steven Jenkins, B.A., Chef

Instructor, Department of Nutrition and Dietetics

When I first entered professional kitchens, I was drawn by the inherent goodness of preparing food and the significant impact that it can have on a person's day and mood. It is a very intimate, tangible goodness. While still personal, food has become much more political and, within the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics, we try to infuse our teaching with curricular strains of environmental sustainability and social justice. It is critical that our students understand that their choices, both personal and professional, will help shape the food supply of tomorrow.

When one-third of the population is obese, yet one in seven Americans received food stamps in 2010, and almost a third of those eligible do not even participate, food is not just a personal issue but a societal one. With these issues in mind, students work with the HELP (Healthy Eating with Local Produce) grant run by the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics in order to combat childhood obesity. They do this by integrating fresh produce into local schools, and they discuss the Farm Bill and USDA policies that make calories cheap and plentiful. Ultimately, the students must develop the critical thinking skills to understand the social, environmental, and economic implications of choices they make regarding food supply.

It is an old maxim that the personal is political, and it most certainly holds true in the kitchen. As a chef/instructor in Nutrition and Dietetics, I play the role of an advocate. For our students must be well trained and ready to contribute in their field, but they must also understand the relevant pressing social, environmental, and political issues so that they are well prepared to take leadership roles.

“The Multiple Roles of a Teacher”

Janet Kuebli, Ph.D.

Associate Professor, Department of Psychology

First teachers often leave big imprints on our lives. My father, Martin Allen Young, who was among my first teachers, passed away on October 6, 2010. He was a speech pathologist whose passions were statistics, music, and my mother, Bobbi. After receiving his Ph.D. in 1960 from the University of Iowa, he accepted his first academic appointment at Western Reserve

University where his starting salary was \$12,000. Subsequently, he went to Illinois State University where he served as chairperson of the Department of Speech Pathology and Audiology for more than 25 years.

Following in my father's footsteps, I too became a college professor. Memories of my father's life as a scholar now comfort me. I remember discovering traces of his work – lengthy mathematical equations dotted with mysterious symbols whose identity I later learned were statistical – on a blackboard in his study. I readily recall him grading, with some disappointment, students' handwritten papers and exams. I fondly remember my dad walking to campus each day with his leather briefcase swinging at his side. On occasion, from that same briefcase he would retrieve, like a magician plucking a rabbit from a hat, reprints of articles he had published. He also shared tips about writing, including “Always finish mid-sentence so that you are mid-thought when your next writing session begins”. These memories and others are imprints of my earliest apprenticeship in becoming a college professor.

From my father, I also learned about the humility that should grace teaching. He sometimes confessed to delivering a particularly bad lecture, so deadly – despite his best efforts – that he himself wanted to leave class early. Of course, this was balanced by the satisfaction of other class periods when everything clicked. Humility was also implicit in his telling (which I never questioned) of Chinese intellectuals during the Revolution who were made to spread night soil in the rice fields. Another insight he shared was that most people (students included) are simply doing the best they can most of the time.

Another gem he held was being concerned with helping his students to better understand the multiple roles he held as their teacher. At the semester's start he announced in class that they would encounter three different versions of him. They would know Dr. Young: the Gatekeeper by the tie he would wear on days when he made assignments, gave exams, or returned papers. His necktie announced the credentialing role that teachers shoulder often. Evaluating quality of performance, not intention and efforts alone, reflects a teacher's responsibility to his or her profession, institution, and to society.

But on many more days, he said, he would arrive tieless, wearing a sweater often knitted by my mother. On these days, his role as Coach was to help each student individually develop talents, self-actualize, and realize aspirations of becoming a speech pathologist. I remember how he wrestled with the mysteries of how people learn, thoughtfully experimenting with different assignments and lessons.

For what I remember, there were no ostensible clues to his third role: the teacher as Radical. This role was closest to his truest self and best revealed through his sense of humor. As the Radical, he sought to empower students (and me) to think outside the lines, to embrace big ideas, and to critically question and scrutinize what we know and believe. Most important to me, he communicated fiercely held beliefs about intellectual freedom, and civil and other forms of liberty that teachers should cherish and protect. Perhaps he should have carried a banner or a flag on these days or at least worn a scarf or a beret.

Upon retirement in 1994, my father went back to college, taking undergraduate courses in topics he loved: history, economics, and philosophy. He continued walking to campus and back to the wife he adored. In his final weeks of life, as the fall semester approached and Parkinson's clouded more of his once formidable mind, he became certain that SLU had asked him to teach. More than mere roles, being a teacher remained at the core of my father's identity to his dying day. I am honored to pay tribute to him by sharing in this essay entailing some of what he taught me, and I, in turn, pass on to others.

“CAPTAIN’S LOG: STARDATE SPRING SEMESTER 2011...”

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Without a doubt my favorite role as Captain of this ship is that of what I call “Artistic/Creativity Facilitator.” No matter what mission we’re on, I incorporate activities in which I can assume this role. Mission-in-Point: Each new class of crew members completes basic training in the areas of Qualitative Research and Presentation of Research findings. After introducing and describing these topics in an engaging manner, I require that crew members (a.k.a students) apply this knowledge to “boldly go where they likely have not gone before!” Since almost all crew members seem to spend at least some of their free time watching medical and/or police-forensics themed TV shows, I developed an activity that allows them to incorporate this leisure-time activity into their studies. Each class determines 6-8 TV shows they tend to watch. A sign-up sheet that results in group formation is created from the identified TV shows. Crew members sign-up for the show they would like to use for the basis of their project. The resulting groups each design a modified qualitative research study that involves observing episodes of their identified TV show. Specifically speaking, each group determines reasonable research question(s), designs a corresponding research matrix that details the study, and identifies study limitations, determines observation guidelines, collects observation data (due to time constraints, this is the only data collection strategy used and hence is the reason for the project being considered as a modified qualitative research study), analyzes data obtained using coding methods and determines the answer(s) to the research question(s). The project culminates in a verbal group presentation of the study conducted. Although creativity is encouraged as crew member groups design their research matrices, it is in the development and implementation of the verbal presentation that my role of “Artistic/Creativity Facilitator” gets “beamed up”. I fulfill this role by meeting with each group. Because I know the crew members quite well by this point, I begin by asking group-tailored probing questions to trigger the artistic/creative mindset of each group member. Sometimes this stimulation results in the group being able to identify and implement artistic/creative strategies appropriate for them and their project. Other times, I offer minimal examples of what other crew members have done to help them “get the ball rolling.” As the group identifies, defines and implements artistic/creative strategies, I serve as a resource; “I’m there when they want me and not when they don’t.” The final verbal presentations have been outstanding! Examples of artistic/creative strategies employed range from role play to news/talk shows. Not only do crew members demonstrate a basic understanding of qualitative research, they present their findings in an artistic/creative manner. Mission Accomplished!!