



# Center for Teaching Excellence Hampton University Teaching Matters

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### Teaching Excellence Related Links

#### ◆ Bloom's Revised Taxonomy

<http://coe.sdsu.edu/eet/Articles/bloomrev/index.htm>

#### ◆ TechLearning – Free subscription

<http://www.techlearning.com/>

## Other Useful Links

#### ◆ Stimulus Funds from the U.S. Department of Education

<http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2010/03/03072010.html>

## In the Next Issue

#### ◆ Interviews with the Edward L. Hamm Distinguished Teaching Award Recipients

## What Makes a Great Teacher?

By Lillie Calloway and Zina McGee

A review of the literature suggests that great teaching is not about technique. Students who have been asked to describe a great teacher will often characterize them as people who lecture all the time, while others may describe them as people who do little other than facilitate group process. Still others describe everything in between. However, results from survey data suggest that all of them describe great teachers as those who have a connective capacity. They connect themselves to their students, their students to each other, and everyone to the subject being studied. In discussions about the quality of someone's teaching, issues of technique, content, and presentation are often addressed. However, in some instances, teachers may have tremendous knowledge but fail to communicate it. In other words, they may have a great lesson on paper, but their students quickly become bored or frustrated. Some have even suggested that good teaching often has less to do with our knowledge and skills than with our attitude towards our students.

Further research shows that some of the characteristics that great teachers exhibit may be viewed simply as a selection of tools that allow teachers to create and sustain connectivity in their classrooms. A few of these qualities have been listed below. While not meant to be all encompassing or definitive, many excellent teachers may possess only some of these traits, and consider others not mentioned to be just as valuable.

### Great teachers:

- **have a *sense of purpose*;**
- **have *expectations of success* for all students;**
- **tolerate *ambiguity*;**
- **demonstrate a *willingness to adapt and change* to meet student needs;**
- **are *comfortable with not knowing*;**
- **reflect on their work;**
- **learn from a *variety of models*;**
- **enjoy their work and their students.**

**Great teachers have a sense of purpose.** As a teacher, this means that you know what your students expect, and you make plans to meet those expectations. You, too, have expectations about

what happens in your classroom, based on the goals you are trying to achieve. If you want to prepare your students for employment, you expect punctuality and good attendance. If you want your students to become better, more involved readers, you allow time for reading and provide access to books.

**Great teachers have expectations of success for all students.**

If we base our self-evaluation purely on the success of our students, we will be disappointed. There are simply too many factors in students' lives for a teacher to be able to guarantee success to all. At the same time, if we give up on our students, adopting the "it's out of my hands" attitude, students will sense our lack of commitment and tune out. Perhaps the affirmative answer to a simple question, *"Did I do everything that I could in this class, this time, to meet the needs of all my students, assuming that complete success was possible?"* will create a climate for success.

**Great teachers know how to live with ambiguity.**

There is no way to predict precisely what the long-term results of our work will be. But if we have a sense of purpose informing our choice of strategies and materials, and we try to cultivate expectations of success for all our students, we will be less likely to dwell on that unpredictability, choosing instead to focus on what we can control, and trusting that thoughtful preparation makes good outcomes more likely than bad ones.

**Great teachers adapt and change to meet student needs.**

We teach so that students will learn, and when learning does not happen, we need to be willing to devise new strategies, think in new ways, and generally do anything possible to revive the learning process. It is wonderful to have a good methodology, but it is better to have students engaged in good learning.

**Great teachers are reflective.**

Great teachers routinely think about and reflect on their classes, their students, their methods, and their materials. They compare and contrast, draw parallels and distinctions, review, remove and restore. Failing to observe what happens in our classes on a daily basis disconnects us from the teaching and learning process, because it is impossible to create connectivity if you have disconnected yourself.

**Great teachers are comfortable with not knowing.**

If we reflect honestly and thoughtfully on what happens in our classes, we will often find dilemmas we cannot immediately resolve, questions we cannot answer. Our teaching benefits if we can live for a little while with a question, think and observe, and let an answer develop in response to the specific situation we face.

**Great teachers had great role models.**

We learn to teach gradually, and absorb ideas and practices from a variety of sources. We are not always aware of the influences on our teaching,

good and bad; reflecting on the different models of teaching we have acquired, and looking at how we acquired them, makes us better able to adapt and change to suit new challenges.

**Great teachers enjoy their work and their students.**

This may seem obvious, but it is easy to lose sight of its importance. Teachers who enjoy their work and their students are motivated, energized, and creative. The opposite of enjoyment is *burnout*-the state where no one and nothing can spark any interest. Focusing too much on content may make students feel extraneous, misunderstood, or left out. Focusing exclusively on students, without an eye to content, may make students feel understood and appreciated, but may not help them to achieve their educational goals as quickly as they would like. Achieving a balance between the two extremes takes time and attention; it demands that we observe closely, evaluate carefully, and act on our findings.

**Now, it is your turn. How Do You Know If You Are a Great Teacher?**

1. You **love your role**, you love being with your students and you couldn't imagine doing anything else. You were meant to teach students, you know this in your heart.
2. You **have a great deal of patience** and know that little steps in learning go a long way.
3. You **know your students well**, and they are comfortable and at ease with you, they enjoy having you as their teacher and look forward to going to class each day.
4. You **provide a non-threatening, welcoming environment** that nurtures each of the students you work with.
5. You understand your students, you **know what motivates them**, and you know how to plan activities to ensure that maximum learning occurs.
6. You **take each student from where they are** and provide experiences that will maximize success. You **are always discovering new things** about your students.
7. You are very **comfortable working with learners**, especially those learners with diverse needs.

**References**

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<http://cowee.wcu.edu/hypermail/lists/newfaculty/0082.html>

<http://ageconseeds.blogspot.com/2010/05/how-do-college-students-describe-great.html>

<http://www.helium.com/items/913125-how-to-tell-a-good-professor-from-a-bad-one>

<http://asp.okstate.edu/baileynorwood/Bailey/filesnb/Final%20Paper.pdf>

### **Announcements**

The *Grantmanship Center* will be hosting the “Grantmanship Training Program” Workshop in Jacksonville, FL from November 1-5, 2010 and in Washington, DC from November 15-19, 2010. Registration is open online at [www.tgci.com](http://www.tgci.com). As a response to increased demand and competition for funding support and training, as well as the high cost of many programs, the Center is offering these courses on the proposal writing and development process. Focusing on the format and structure of the successful grant proposal, this course provides attendees with an overview of each part of the grant proposal, avenues for researching available grant programs, and concludes with fundamental proposal writing techniques. This workshop is an excellent introduction for the beginning fundraiser, those requiring a refresher, and those required to write their own grant proposals. Those interested in attending must register at [www.tgci.com](http://www.tgci.com). Registration will remain open until the maximum amount of registered attendees has been reached. For more information about this training, please call at 1-213-482-9860.

AAC & U will present *Creativity, Inquiry, and Discovery: Undergraduate Research In and Across the Disciplines* Register by October 18 for early discount meeting rates.

November 11-13, 2010  
Durham, North Carolina

*Creativity, Inquiry, and Discovery: Undergraduate Research In and Across the Disciplines* will showcase promising models of undergraduate research. The conference will also help participants address issues related to the sustainability and evolution of this veteran practice, including

- broadening participation in undergraduate research, especially among underserved students;
- aligning undergraduate research with broader student learning goals;
- supporting faculty innovation and leadership for these efforts;
- assessing students' undergraduate research; and
- institutionalizing undergraduate research in and across the disciplines.

## Conference Highlights

Keynote Address  
**"Defining Dimensions of Undergraduate Research"**  
*Nancy Hensel*, Executive Director, Council on Undergraduate Research

Dr. Hensel is the principal investigator on three NSF grants to assist four-year and community colleges in developing undergraduate research. She is the coeditor of *Undergraduate Research at Community Colleges* with Brent D. Cejda and *Transformative Research at Predominantly Undergraduate Institutions* with Kerry K. Karukstis.

Plenary  
**"Undergraduate Research across the Disciplines: Evidence of Impact"**  
*Susan Elrod*, Executive Director, Project Kaleidoscope, AAC&U; *Jillian L. Kinzie*, Associate Director, National Survey of Student Engagement, Indiana University Bloomington; and *Elaine Seymour*, Director of Ethnography and Evaluation Research, University of Colorado at Boulder

Luncheon and  
*Separate registration and fee required*  
**"The Art of Questioning and Exploring Our Universe"**  
*John R. Stilgoe*, Robert and Lois Orchard Professor in the History of Landscape, Harvard University. Dr. Stilgoe is the author of numerous books, including *Outside Lies Magic: Regaining History and Awareness in Everyday Places* and *Landscape and Images*.

Plenary  
**"Getting Ready for 2042: Mentoring Students Toward Discovery"**  
*Carlos Gutiérrez*, Professor of Chemistry, School of Natural and Social Sciences, California State University, Los Angeles. Dr. Gutiérrez directs the National Institutes of Health Minority Access to Research Careers and Minority Biomedical Research Support programs. A 2005 U.S. Professor of the Year, he has mentored more than 200 students and written numerous articles, all with student coauthors.



The **Undergraduate Research issue** of *Peer Review* highlights undergraduate programs that integrate students into the research community through mentored experiences in various disciplines. Learn more about this issue **online** at [www.aacu.org](http://www.aacu.org).

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