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Teaching Philosophy

“Teaching should be such that what is offered is perceived as a valuable gift and not as a hard duty.” ...
Albert Einstein

I love to teach. I love the thrill of seeing a student experience the rush of grasping a new idea. The opportunity to nurture a love of learning, both in myself and in my students, is one of the main reasons I am pursuing academic career after spending several years in industry.

My philosophy of teaching is tied closely to my belief that the role of faculty in higher education is to serve student needs, but also the needs of their future employers. As students prepare for their future, our role as educators is to facilitate their development so that they will excel in their careers. I have envisioned the achievement of this goal through the following educational aspects:

Classroom

Usually there are two activities happening in the classroom: teaching and learning. Just in a grammatical sense teaching implies students being acted upon, it implies passivity. Learning, however, is inherently active. I believe from my own experiences as a student and from observing how today’s students have been conditioned, that education has become more teacher driven than learner driven. The teacher is the dominant figure in most classrooms. Teachers dispense knowledge that students way too often merely absorb. Such a philosophy has the potential to undervalue curiosity, creativity, originality and individuality. There is no doubt that sometimes I have to “teach”, but mostly I would like to view the classroom as an environment in which my students can learn. We should strive to remove the belief the students often hold that learning and education happen in 80-minute blocks in a classroom. We have to develop students who see life as a constant learning opportunity and themselves as their greatest potential teacher. Curiosity turns students into explorers. Curiosity encourages learning for the sake of appreciation and betterment leading students to understand that with a small arsenal of information and reasoning skills they can solve a host of problems they will encounter throughout their lives. To this end, I aspire to be a role model for my students, constantly sharing my curiosity and my persistent pursuit of greater understanding, a reason why I never stopped learning and being a student.

Laboratory

The more students can touch it, feel it, see it, the more they learn and enjoy it. Meaningful learning is experimental and has practical outcomes. In less literary terms, showing is better than telling, and doing is better than showing. I want my students doing. To this end I strive to develop a strong laboratory where students gain experience and technique without neglecting their classroom responsibilities, but rather complementing them. The experiment is a valuable tool. The thrill of discovery and satisfaction of a well-solved problem is an incredible incentive. Students need a firm foundation of laboratory and research skills that cannot be taught in the classroom.

Interaction with Students

Teaching may be one of the most challenging professions, in part because there are so many aspects to it, and in part because no one teaching strategy will work for every student (or for every teacher, for that matter). A teacher must be a lecturer, an advisor, a mentor, an evaluator, a counselor, a resource, and much more, all of this while tailoring his or her approach to any of a number of different situations and individual people. Understanding the individual student entails understanding the student's learning styles, background, and prior knowledge in the subject. To achieve this degree of individual understanding, I strive for a high level of interaction with my students, in an atmosphere of friendly cooperation. Through this interaction I come to better understand their individual needs. Every student brings different experiences, backgrounds and abilities into the classroom. And, for each student, all of these are constantly changing. I don't believe I can help my students move toward where they want to go unless I know where they've been and where they aspire to go. Knowing my students at a level of recognition isn't enough. The more I know them, the more I'm committed to their growth and success. The more they know I'm committed to them, the more committed they become to their learning.