

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS



College of Agricultural,
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UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

From the Office of the Associate Dean

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The Teaching-Research Relationship

Across the years we have reported the many, empirical studies that have sought to explore and quantify the relationship between teaching and research. The results have been remarkably consistent: these correlational studies offer evidence that teaching and research are separate activities, independent of each other. The relationship is not a negative one. Good researchers are not automatically poor teachers, and good teachers are not automatically poor researchers, but neither is the relationship positive, as many believe. Research and teaching, according to this research, are not synergistically related with each activity feeding off and contributing to the growth of the other. The activities are unrelated.

And yet as compelling as these data are, they do not conform with the experience of many faculty members who feel that the two are positively linked in their professional lives. Could these empirical models be framing the question too simplistically? Perhaps the relationship is more complex, multi-layered, and variable.

Researchers in Great Britain found the following generalizations substantiated by their research.

- Both undergraduate and graduate students associate more benefits than disadvantages with faculty research.
- Both levels of students agree that knowledge currency, credibility, competence in supervision, and enthusiasm/motivation are enhanced by faculty research activity.
- Both groups associate some disadvantages with faculty research, including reduced availability, competition with teaching, and curriculum distortion (faculty “overtaching” topics related to their research interests).

- Undergraduates feel excluded from direct involvement with faculty research.
- Undergraduates make a greater number of negative statements about research as the amount of research activity in a department increases.
- Graduates make a greater number of positive comments and a smaller number of negative statements about the effect of research on teaching as the amount of research activity in a department increases.

In sum, these researchers offer that “this more direct and focused methodology has generated a consistent set of data that seem to support the ‘conventional’ wisdom of many...that synergies occur between research and teaching.”

This work challenges us to think further about this important relationship and to consider perspectives other than our own. We ought to be considering what kinds of policies at departmental and institutional levels might strengthen the potential linkages between teaching and research and what policies prevent a productive interaction. Thinking that the relationship between teaching and research is either always negative or always positive is simplistic. And the idea that the two are totally unrelated is counterintuitive. It is a relationship that merits fuller exploration – intellectual, analytical, and empirical.

Reference: Lindsay, R., Breen, R. and Jenkins, A. (2002). Academic research and teaching quality: the views of undergraduate and postgraduate students. *Students in Higher Education*, 27 (3) 309-327.

Adapted from *The Teaching Professor*, November, 2002.

SHOW ME A TEACHER WHO IS
BORED, AND I'LL SHOW YOU A
TEACHER WHO IS BORING.
- LEE S. SHULMAN

Active Learning: Implementation of Our Best Intentions

We could provide evidence that much teaching still relies on passive strategies and that despite all our commitments to the contrary, active learning is often implemented less than perfectly.

The following set of eminently sensible practical suggestions mostly tackles implementation issues. Follow this advice and your active learning strategies are more likely to accomplish their potential.

Set the stage. Include a statement in your syllabus, such as “I will be using a variety of teaching strategies in this class. Some of these activities may require that you interact with me or other students in the class. I hope you will find these methods interesting and engaging and that they enable you to be more successful in this course.”

Develop a grading policy that supports active learning. If active learning experiences are important enough to spend class time on, they are important enough to be included in the course’s grading scheme. We send mixed messages when we ask students to engage in an activity, then say that this work doesn’t count significantly in the final grade.

Make sure that active learning experiences add value, and identify the purpose and student learning outcomes. Two points here: active learning is not undertaken for its own sake, but involves substantive interactions that promote understanding and skills acquisition. And second, don’t assume that the value and purpose of an active learning activity is clear and obvious to students. If that purpose is not understood, students will likely see it as time wasted.

Eliminate lecture material to provide time for active learning. Don’t choke on this aspect of active learning. It’s the place where most faculty cheat. They still cover the same amount of content and cram the active learning activities into an already full course. That approach diminishes the value of both the active learning experiences and the content presentation. As radical as this may sound, content can be conceived in ways where less is more.

Debrief in-class learning activities. This debriefing provides critical closure for students. It doesn’t mean answering all the unanswered questions or clarifying all that is confusing but does mean guiding the discussion so that the correct responses

emerge from the group or that a follow-up activity is generated.

Bracket mini-lectures with in-class active learning experiences. The sequencing of lecture and activity is more complex than it first appears. How can they be connected and ordered so that one builds on the other? How can they be sequenced so that content comes as students see its value and need to know it?

Interact with students during active learning experiences. As students work in small groups or pairs, instructors can stroll among the groups answering questions students may not have the courage to ask in the large group and commenting informally on what’s being expressed in the group.

Determine how you will accommodate nonparticipation in learning activities. Do students have the right not to participate in group activities? Students should be encouraged to participate in learning with others, but they respect students’ rights to learn independently. If teachers have students who prefer to work by themselves, they make it a point to interact with those loners.

Use or respond to student feedback whenever possible. Using student feedback to make improvement in the learning experience reinforces the notion that your class is a partnership and that you value your students’ ideas as a means to strengthen that partnership and create more successful learning.

Document observations and results of learning experiences in “real time.” The time to make notes as to whether the learning activity should be repeated and/or revised is shortly after the activity has been completed. If you’re like most of us, all the insights you had when it happened will have vanished by time you do that activity again. Give yourself a gift. Write three suggestions on Post-its notes and see how happy it makes you when you discover them as you’re prepping next semester.

Reference: McLanaha, E. B., and McLanahan, L. L. (Summer 2002). Active learning in a non-majors biology class. *College Teaching*, 50 (3), 92-96.

Adapted from *The Teaching Professor*, November 2002.

ACES Convocation
Sunday, May 18, 2003

Is Teaching Ability Recognized?

Like a refrain one hears in current discussions of academic problems remarks like the following: "These objectives can be obtained only if the teaching ability of faculty members is given as much recognition as is given to research ability." "Teaching ability is not rewarded by our colleges as is research ability."

If someone does not soon question the accuracy of these statements they will come to be believed through mere repetition. The first time I ever heard the validity of such assertions openly and adequately challenged was during the meeting of the American Society of Agronomy in 1942. A session was being held on teaching and its problems. A guest speaker had repeated the time-worn remark that in our colleges teaching is not rewarded as is research. In the course of the discussion which followed Dr. H. K. Hayes, of Minnesota, offered the comment that teaching ability in that field was recognized and rewarded. He added that if necessary he could present that proof.

The discussion went on. As I was a visitor, only a few of the men present were known to me personally. It was, however, evident from the remarks that many of them were men of unquestioned eminence in their field. The group evidently included a good number of heads of large departments of agronomy and a sprinkling of deans of agriculture. Finally some one asked Professor Hayes for his proof. His reply, which I quote from memory, was somewhat as follows: "I have objective proof. It is here in this room. I do not wish to embarrass anyone so I will not name individuals unless someone insists, but I see here a goodly number of individuals of recognized standing and influence in their fields whose positions rest on their recognized ability as teachers rather than as investigators." That ended the discussion.

Of course I have no information as to the salaries received by these outstanding teachers; that seems to be the critical point, but it seems unlikely that they have been conspicuously less well paid than their fellows.

Apparently one source of the assertion so freely made that teaching ability as such is not adequately rewarded is the failure of those who make it to recognize that teaching ability may be coupled with other abilities. In other words, the mere fact that a member of a college faculty is unable or unwilling to

carry out a research program does not constitute *prima facie* evidence of teaching ability of a high order.

Adapted from *Science*, February 4, 1944, by Neil E. Stevens, University of Illinois

Higher Education's Goals

A national poll by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education and Public Agenda reports that the public ranks higher education's goals in the following order, in terms of the proportion of respondents who believed each to be "absolutely essential":

- Sense of maturity and [ability to] manage on [one's] own (71%)
- Ability to get along with people different from self (68%)
- Problem solving and thinking ability (63%)
- High-technology skills (61%)
- Specific expertise and knowledge in chosen career (60%)
- Top-notch writing and speaking ability (57%)
- Responsibilities of citizenship (44%)

From an article in *Change*, January/February 2003

Make My Day

A faculty member received this note from a parent of a student in a class fall semester: "She probably did not tell you, but she thought you were outstanding. I told her you would be the best prof she would have at UI and she says I was right. The last few semesters she has really gotten into 'learning' and is excited about all of her classes. I do not remember ever being that excited about my classes."

Getting our students "into learning" and "excited about class." That's what it's all about!

**ACES Student Awards
Banquet
Sunday, April 27, 2003
Park Inn Conference Center**

Course Renumbering

The UIUC campus continues to move forward toward implementing an expanded course numbering system effective Fall 2004. All nine units in ACES (the departments, Nutritional Sciences and the College) have submitted a plan for revised course numbers and course descriptions. Several have also proposed rubric changes to meet the standards of the software program and to clarify existing course rubrics. The course renumbering process allowed an opportunity to revise some course prerequisites as well, although a decision has still not been made regarding whether the computer system will actually check for prerequisites and, if so, block registration when the prerequisites are not met. Caution -- these changes will not be in effect until Fall 2004, including descriptions and prerequisites changes. The first opportunity for students to see the new system in print will be the Timetable for Fall 2004, available in Spring 2004 for fall registration.

There is still much work to be done, including proofreading what comes back from campus and revising the ACES Student Handbook and various College and department materials. Special thanks to the Key Contacts who have worked diligently with faculty and staff in their units and with Academic Programs to move this project forward in a timely manner. ACES is the only College that has submitted its final materials. Thanks to Hilda Lakner, Dini Reid, Tom Carr, Fred Kolb, Bill Artz, Gerry Walter, Mary Lowry, Sharon Donovan, Wayne Banwart and Anne Stites for their extraordinary efforts.

Taking Learning Seriously

Lee S. Shulman, President of The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, was keynote speaker for the UIUC Annual Faculty Retreat on Active Learning. The following is from his writings.

What do we mean by “taking learning seriously?” Four interesting questions reflect what’s involved in taking up that challenge.

First, What does it mean to take anything seriously? I answer that when we take something quite seriously, we *profess* it.

Second, What do we mean by learning? I argue that learning is far more than bringing knowledge from outside the person to inside. Indeed, learning is basically an interplay of two challenging processes—getting knowledge that is inside to move out, and getting knowledge that is outside to move in.

Third, What does learning look like when it’s not going well? I’ve spent much of my career in medical education, so I’m concerned not only with health, but with pathology as well. I propose that the major pathologies of learning involve malfunctions of memory, understanding, and application and can be called *amnesia*, *fantasia*, and *inertia*.

Fourth, What do you need to create in order to take learning so seriously that you take active responsibility for understanding and treating its pathologies as well as enhancing its successes? I claim that you must create a *scholarship of teaching* to pursue those goals.

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101 Mumford Hall, MC-710
1301 W. Gregory Drive
Urbana, IL 61801