"Committed to excellence in education"

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The Po'okela newsletter is a bimonthly publication featuring articles of interest to faculty regarding pedagogy, scholarship, and service at Hawai'i Pacific University.

Profile: Patrice Wilson, Ph.D.

By Sandra Meyer and Michael Dabney. Reprinted with permission.

By the time you read this article, Patrice Wilson will have been awarded her doctorate in English through the University of Hawai'i, culminating a journey that began seven and a half years ago. In a recent TLC interview, Patrice shared some insight into her (sometimes grueling) journey towards obtaining a Ph.D.

Patrice Wilson teaches English at Hawai'i Pacific University. She joined HPU as an adjunct instructor in 1994 and came on board full-time in January 1997.

Patrice was born in New Jersey, the second of six children. Her mother, a nurse, and father, a chemist who furthered his education to become a city manager, both understood the value of a higher education, and Patrice acknowledges the important role they played in steering her in the direction she would eventually take. She attended Yale University and the University of Maryland at College Park and moved to Hawai'i in 1985.

Patrice completed her Master of Arts in Creative Writing at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa in 1992. She realized early that the prospects for advancement in academia were available only with a doctorate. A salary increase was only one of several factors that motivated her doctoral work. The knowledge and expertise she knew she would gain during her studies, and the support of her colleagues at the English program, also helped her with this decision.

Patrice completed her master's thesis in creative writing, but she chose a dissertation on Oceanic literature, an area of intense personal interest. She published a collection of poetry in 2003 and is working towards a full-length book of poetry, which she hopes to put together sometime in the summer.

A requirement of her Ph.D. program was fluency in a third language. Patrice felt that Spanish was a logical choice, given the fact that she was doing post-colonial studies. However, not everything in the process was smooth sailing. Patrice recounts the time she sat through her "area exams", which required her to answer two 10-page questions in a 24-hour time-frame. She found this step grueling–both physically and mentally. Another challenge was the oral examinations. When Patrice found out she had failed the first round of her "orals", she was extremely upset, but found comfort in the colleagues and mentors who rallied around her.

Juggling a full-time job and studies proved to be a challenge too. Patrice found herself devoting less time to committee and creative work; since she did not qualify for a tuition waver, the cost of tuition was an added burden. The prospect of becoming a student all over again was also awkward for Patrice.

While she is proud of all she has achieved in the past seven and a half years, Patrice adamantly declares that she "wouldn't do it again!" For prospective Ph.D. candidates, she has these suggestions:

1) If you can go just as far with a lesser degree, then think carefully about embarking on a Ph.D. But if you think you can go further, then by all means, go ahead!

2) Determine how much your salary will increase as a result of your degree.

3) Get information in writing about the degree process you are embarking on, and ask questions of your department head.

4) Be prepared for the rigor involved.

We wish Patrice continued success in her career here at HPU!

TEN THINGS TO DO OR YOU CAN KISS YOUR CLASS GOODBYE

By Luke Reinsma

1. First impressions matter.

The first two days of class – even the first 15 minutes of the quarter – will make or break it. It's crucial that you get students talking – that you not just hand out a syllabus and send students off to do their homework, already numbed to the prospect of another quarter of the teacher talking at them.

2. Learn their names.

Pass out a seating chart and then spend an hour or so memorizing your students' names. (The photos that accompany your class roster are a welcome help!) Your attempt at learning your students' names by the end of the first week of class will be rewarding. No, not like on a course evaluation. Rewarding, rather, as in two people leaning across a table engaged in conversation.

3. Your syllabus should be organized, substantial, thesis-driven, and relevant.

That is to say, it should provide students with a clear sense of the shape of your course and with specific assignments for each day (or week) of the quarter. It should require students to spend a couple of hours outside of class for each hour within. It should seek to move students from A to B–towards a new understanding, a re-evaluation, and a discovery. And, last, it should be, implicitly and yet fundamentally, for and about them. Not that your course needs be hip or trendy. But one of the best compliments students might pay you is to say that they never knew that your course had anything to do with their lives. It should.

4. Stick to your syllabus.

All of us know what it's like to get swatted by last-minute committee meetings or changes of plans. Students, too, need security. They need the comfort of knowing what's coming around the corner–deadlines or assignments, papers, and exams. So stick to your deadlines! When you reschedule even one due date or exam day, it jostles everything else: for the rest of the quarter, students will not be confident that what the syllabus says will happen, will happen.

5. Will you take attendance?

If we quit taking attendance and quit harassing students with pop quizzes, would students desert our classes in droves? If so–if attendance sheets and pop quizzes are all that keep our students chained to the oars of the galleys – that is, of course, the students' problem, but it's also ours. Of course, there are legitimate reasons for keeping tabs on our students: there is much to be said for "encouraging" our students to learn. But there's even more to be said for making each of our class periods so valuable a learning experience that students kick themselves for having missed the class, rather than for having attended. Besides, what a pleasure it is to teach a class of students who are there not by coercion but by choice!

6. Students should be able to fail your class.

Not just because they don't attend, but because your course and exams are substantial. More specifically, your exams should be sufficiently detailed, so that amorphous responses to essay questions alone will not result in a passing grade. When students slide through a course with what used to be called a "gentleman's C"–these days, a gentleperson's B–the course feels like a waste of their time and money. When that happens, you lose their respect. And when that happens, they spend the quarter waiting for you to die.

7. Do conferences.

It's good to meet with each of your students at least once during the quarter, often with the excuse of reviewing the first draft of a paper. But the real purpose of such a conference is to chat for ten minutes – where students are from, their major, hobbies, how school's going, and so on. Admittedly, it's a lot of time. Forty students will require roughly 20 hours of your time during the quarter, two hours a week during a 10-week quarter. But it's an investment that will pay off richly in trust and respect, both of which are indispensable prerequisites to learning.

8. Give students the option of rewriting their papers.

Doing rewrites has three advantages. First, it invites students to actually read not just your grade but your comments. Second, it introduces them to the possibility of discovering new ideas and thus to the process of writing. And, third, it gives students hope, which is what gets all of us up in the morning. For the record, it works best to limit students to a single rewrite (so that grades don't get ratcheted up interminably), to require students to submit first and second drafts (so you can compare the two), and to raise the paper grade by no more than a grade (1/3 for editing, 2/3 for paragraph-level revision, and 3/3 for a substantial rewrite). Lest this seem too onerous a burden, you can skim these rewrites with ruthless efficiency –five minutes a paper.

9. Give students essay topics for their exams a week in advance.

At the risk of caving into mediocrity, it's often useful to distribute the essay questions for exams a week in advance, and then invite students to get together in study groups to prepare for the essays. Of course, they'll think you're a sap for removing the element of shock and awe that unanticipated essays provide, but the real value of an exam comes in its preparation. And if you can get students thinking and talking collaboratively about these essay topics a week – instead of an hour – in advance of the exam, then there's something less like cramming and more like learning going on.

10. Your exams should assemble the pieces of your course.

If the days of our courses are like the pieces of a puzzle, which we gradually collect over a quarter, it's not enough to test students on the names of 30 puzzle pieces on their final exam. Rather, a good exam will assemble these pieces into a frame in order to provide students with the "big picture." In bureaucratese, our exams need to test for the stated objectives of the course. Put simply, if your course is intended to help students speak intelligently about, say, a work of modern art, your final exam should ask them to discuss a work of modern art. In fact, your entire course should be aimed at the bull's-eye of these final essay questions.

Last, ignore any of the items above. Each of us teaches at our best from out of who we are. For any of the items above, substitute that which helps you to teach and students to learn most effectively.

Luke Reinsma is professor of English at Seattle Pacific University. He is also a past winner of the university's President's Award for Excellence: Faculty. *This article has been reprinted with his permission.*

EXCELLENCE: An Immodest Proposal

By Lee S. Shulman

Recently, I participated in a site visit to the teaching hospital of a major American medical school. These visits are an integral part of the Carnegie Foundation's 10-year program of research on how lawyers, engineers, clergy, school teachers, nurses, and physicians are taught and how they learn. On this visit, I joined a team of students and faculty in the daily ritual of clinical rounds. I use the term "ritual" quite precisely: the clinical-rounds team follows the same pedagogical pattern daily as it moves from patient to patient and reviews the status of each. The team I observed included a chief resident, a third-year resident, two first-year residents, two third-year medical students beginning their internal medicine rotation, and a pharmacy student on internship. Each of seven patients comprised a "lesson" within a unit of instruction. We stopped outside every room. The resident or medical student responsible for that patient gave a report that followed a strict outline. We talked about what had changed from the previous day. Patients ranged from someone who had been in the intensive care unit for less than twenty-four hours to one who had been in a coma for 30 days. After 30 days of clinical investigation, the causes of this patient's condition were still unknown.

Next, the chief resident discussed what had occurred during the rounds with the third-year resident in a "preceptor interaction", essentially like a supervising teacher with a student teacher. They reviewed how rounds had gone pedagogically and talked about what other questions one might have asked, what other aspects of patients' conditions one might have noted, how well patients were managed and whether to do something different. We then moved to teaching rounds, in which the chief resident presented a didactic seminar on pulmonary function tests.

The day ended with "M&M" (Morbidity and Mortality), otherwise known as, "Where Did We Screw Up and What Can We Learn from It?" Pretty much the same group from morning rounds reconvened, joined by other faculty. Their goal was quality assurance. They reviewed, at an institutional level, one of their most persistent failures, namely the unacceptably high infection rate in the intensive care unit, primarily associated with running central lines into arteries. Data indicated that the infection rate is higher under certain circumstances, lower under others. Everyone in the system was learning. In fact, an assistant professor ran the session, with full professors learning alongside third-year clerks.

This kind of communal questioning and learning is compelling. Where in higher education more generally do we find an institutional pressure to come together and ask why students are not learning mathematics or economics well, and what to do institutionally about that? What I watched at this teaching hospital was an institution actively investigating the quality of its work, knowing, caring, and operating corporately to improve and learn from its collective experience. This is an important model for the rest of higher education. But it was a model not only of a powerful pedagogical process but of something else-something we see far too seldom in education.

During the last part of this Morbidity and Mortality conference, the facilitator noted that every major hospital had a problem with high infection rates in ICU's associated with running central lines, especially in the femoral artery. Unfortunately, it's easiest for medical practitioners to run a line in the femoral artery. (Perhaps running femoral lines is analogous to running lecture courses; they're not necessarily the most effective, but they deliver the goods to the largest number at the lowest cost.) In any case, the facilitator mentioned that the hospital had decided that the high infection rates were unacceptable. The medical school dean and the university president met with the teaching hospital staff and decided they knew enough to approach a zero percent rate of infection. *The problem was not absence of knowledge of best practice, but absence of discipline and commitment to apply that knowledge.* Therefore, they developed a rigorous protocol for running central lines.

THE PROBLEM WAS NOT ABSENCE OF KNOWLEDGE OF BEST PRACTICE, BUT ABSENCE OF DISCIPLINE AND COMMITMENT TO APPLY THAT KNOWLEDGE.

The protocol involves things such as how carefully and frequently hands are washed, and not making things easier on oneself by using the same line to draw blood and deliver medication because the odds for an infection zoom up every time that happens. Nurses enforce the protocol and oversee each procedure, and nurses are empowered to abort a procedure as soon as they see protocol being violated, whether by an intern or by the department chair. Early on in this new routine, every nurse was handed two phone numbers - the home phone number of the medical school dean and the university president - and told that if a physician didn't follow protocol and refused to abort the procedure, he/she was to phone one of these numbers, even at 3:00 a.m. That only happened once. The infection rate at Johns Hopkins for that procedure is now approaching zero.

Like infection rates, the failures of education are often procedural. In the M&M conference, the discussion of acceptable levels of infection sounded like arguments about acceptable levels of

student failure. If one-third of students drop out in the first year, some may be ready to claim that those students simply shouldn't have entered college. What if a hospital said that if it lost a third of its patients, those patients never should have been admitted because they were too sick?

Faculty and teaching institutions face many impediments, just like physicians: the conditions and capabilities of our students are often unknown. But what if, at some universities, the president was called every time a student failed? This proposal sounds crazy, I know, but that's just the point. We're too comfortable with our failures; we take them for granted.

The good news is that we can do much better. We know a great deal today about how to organize our institutions and classrooms so that students not only stay but achieve at high levels, and research in the cognitive sciences and other fields provides grist for further improvements. I know we lack the resources. I know we lack the administrative and policy support. I know that some students we inherit are already deeply wounded. Nevertheless, we need to ask much more of ourselves. Education is no place for modest ambitions.

Adapted from an article by Lee S. Shulman, president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (CFAT), No. 20 in the monthly series Carnegie Foundation Perspectives. *These short commentaries exploring various educational issues are produced by the CFAT, found online at http://www.carnegiefoundation.org. This article has been reprinted with permission.*

It's All About Attitude

By Louis Schmier

Mike Ditke

Someone asked me to describe teaching. I think I'll describe my teaching or at least the spirit with which I teach. But I'm not going to talk about my discipline, or my methods, or my philosophy of education, or my credo. I think I'll talk about what I struggle to get students to understand about themselves and their potential.

Mike Ditke, an ex-pro football coach, recently explained why one talented team got trounced. "It's a game of attitude. You can have all the talent and ability, but if you don't have the right attitude, you don't have much and can't do much."

In their daily journals, in everyday conversations, in small talk, I see how so many students have shut down that part of themselves that houses their dreams. They've been wrapped so tightly in fear of failing that they're not free to freely have the courage to achieve. They don't understand how much they can make their lives better by virtue of their own attitudes or how much energy they expend by worrying, or how much strength and stamina is sapped by fear. They don't realize that nothing can stop them when they choose to keep going or that they hold back themselves from being their full selves. Instead they concentrate on a hesitant "I am" rather than on a bold "I can be."

They don't understand that paying a large price of not risking makes them smaller or that they can only move around within the cramped confines of their self-imposed limits.

So, how do I describe my teaching? Wholeness! Every semester, beginning with getting to know you exercises, and moving on to responses to journal entries, projects, "Words For The Day" and ordinary conversation, I work on their attitude. If they don't have the right attitude about themselves they won't do much with learning the subject matter.

So, I urge them to break out of their own confining prison, grow beyond their confining limits, and start discovering their limitless potential It's a kind of hands-on, "stop-start" sort of approach on which everything I do and everything they do rests. It's a form stretching that is far more daring and challenging than anything the students will feel in a workout at the recreation center. It's also a stretching of their faith, hope and confidence in themselves. It's a stretching that starts within.

I offer students a long series of demanding stretching lessons that go through spiritual stations of stretching, opening the cell door, daring to peek out, risking to step out, and tapping their unused potential to start growing. With my eyes, my voice, my lips, my hands, my inflections, my body, at every chance and in every place and in every way, this is what I tell student after student as each wades through the muck of confusion, questions, hesitations, anxieties, excuses, rationales, fears, blames, and lies:

- Stop stopping and start starting.
- Stop blaming and start accepting responsibility
- Stop making excuses and start making choices
- Stop every challenge from being an obstacle that stops you and start seeing those challenges as opportunities to grow.
- Stop worrying about the load you're carrying and start thinking about how to carry that load.
- Stop with the "I'll try" and start with the "I'll do."
- Stop accepting negatives and start accentuating the positives.
- Stop trying to control people and things around you and start controlling yourself.
- Stop trying to get the most by doing the least and start doing the most to get the most.

continued on page 5

- Stop putting on your brakes and start hitting your accelerator.
- Stop getting knocked down and staying down and start getting up and getting on.
- Stop being all work or all play and start being whole and balanced.
- Stop being stopped at the first obstacle and start overcoming, enduring, and persevering.
- Stop complaining about what you don't have and start making the most of what you have right now.
- Stop using your own words and thoughts to put yourself down and start using your own words and thoughts to lift yourself up.
- Stop thinking avoiding mistakes is the way to success and start knowing that the secret to success is learning from your mistakes.
- Stop imposing limits on yourself and start seeing that you have no limits.
- Stop accepting being average and start pursuing excellence.

I hope to get them to see that every challenge can make them stronger and that every risk can make them more daring.

But, you know, I also tell all this every day to myself as well. When I am alone, in my quiet places, it always comes to me that I must not only say these stop/starts, write them on the board, teach them, encourage them, and advocate them, but I must consciously and conscientiously live them and model them.

I have to be all about by how I live, not by what I say or write.

Louis Schmier is professor of History at Valdosta State University in Georgia and often reflects on teaching in posts to the POD (Professional and Organizational Development) Network. This excerpt has been reprinted with his permission.

Book Review

By Sandra Meyer

The Chalk Dust Collection – Thoughts and Reflections on Teaching in Colleges and Universities

Linc Fisch. Published by New Forums Press Inc, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 1996.

The author of this highly readable collection of articles and thoughts on teaching is the former associate dean of students at Hiram College and the University of Akron, and has over 30 years of higher education to his credit.

Linc Fisch's frequent contributions to journals of higher learning, such as *The Teaching Professor* and the *Journal of Faculty Development*, prompted him to compile his thoughts and experiences in this single volume. He shares his thoughts and ideas on teaching, many of which were conceived in mundane settings such as the dentist's chair, airplane and garden. These include his somewhat unconventional "Seven Principles of Teaching Seldom Taught in Grad School" ("One of the best things that can happen to you is losing your notes from the last time you taught the course" and "It's more important to determine how much you are leave out of a class session than to figure out how to jam everything in"). Fortunately, the explanations that follow are less unorthodox than the headings make them out to be!

In one of the chapters, "Advice for New Teachers" Fisch uses interesting analogies to describe the art of teaching – including that of a piano recital, "You could learn scales and all the basics of playing the piano, along with all the notes of a sonata, but that would not be sufficient to play the piece well." In another part of the book, he compares the teacher to an artist, who, he explains, needs to have a sense of mission and "audacious courage" to create change, in order to produce masterpieces and not succumb to the "front porch rocker syndrome."

Fisch also dishes out tips on "Strategic Teaching" which is the humbling and retrospective process that often follows a new teacher's lofty aspirations to become "Super Prof". There are some handy pointers on how a college teacher can play up his or her strengths and resources and downplay his/her deficiencies in a constantly evolving profession.

This book is available at the Teaching and Learning Center's Resource Library.

The heights by great men reached and kept were not obtained by sudden flight, but they, while their companions slept were toiling upward in the night.

~ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

The Professor in the Classroom

Redeeming yourself with students when you err – a vital professional action

If students are waiting and watching for you to make a mistake, they won't have to wait or watch for long. That's because, regardless of how much experience we have or how good we are, we will inevitably make mistakes. This is especially true if we are continuing to push ourselves to learn and improve.

FIRST, YOU SHOULD OPENLY ADMIT YOUR MISTAKES WITHOUT ANY "ANDS", "IFS" OR "BUTS".

Certainly, not all our mistakes are careless errors. But when we make a mistake with students, we have to admit that we erred and try to make things right. First, you should openly admit your mistakes without any "ands", "ifs" or "buts". Second, if the mistake was made because of insensitivity or inconsiderateness, an apology is in order. Thirdly, make sure you learn from the experience and not let it happen again.

However, if you don't or won't admit that you've erred, students will not respect you. They will not trust you and for the rest of their lives, they may tell people the story of how you slighted them or embarrassed them. If you sweep your mistakes under the carpet, don't expect students to take the higher road. You can demand or force compliance, but students will know that you will get away with it only because you have the power and authority.

The effective professor does not fear making a mistake. Once we've taken appropriate action, we must go forward. Professionally, we must view mistakes as lessons in acquiring wisdom. We ought to forgive our mistakes but not forget them, so that we won't repeat them again and again.

Excerpts from "Redeeming Yourself With Students When You Err", The Professor in the Classroom. 11.12 (February 2005). This article has been reprinted with permission.

"Give to every other human being every right that you claim for yourself"
- Robert G. Ingersoll

Good teachers teach what they believe in,
In a way they believe in, feeling that nothing else could work.

But every mind is unique.
And every interaction between two minds is unlike any interaction between other minds.

So master teachers are never satisfied with what they do;
They are always changing the playing field,
Tinkering with the game,
Leaving room for the unexpected.

taken from "The Way of the Teacher" *by J.M. Haile, Macatea Productions, Central, South Carolina, 2005.*

I long to accomplish a great and noble task, but it is my chief duty to accomplish humble tasks as though they were great and noble. The world is moved along not only by the mighty shoves of its heroes, but also by the aggregate of the tiny pushes of each honest worker.

Helen Keller

There is one thing over which each person has absolute, inherent control, and that is his mental attitude.

W. Clement Stone

WHEN EDUCATORS SPEAK…

"To have ideas is to gather flowers. To think is to weave them into garlands."

~ Anne-Sophie Swetchine

"The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires."

~ William Arthur Ward

"The will to succeed is important, but what's even more important is the will to prepare."

~ Bobby Knight

"Good teaching is one-fourth preparation and three-fourths theater."

~ Gail Godwin

"Sixty years ago, I knew everything; now, I know nothing. Education is a progressive discovery of our own ignorance."

~ Will Durant

"It is not impossibilities which fill us with the deepest despair, but possibilities which we have failed to realize."

~ Robert Mallet

"Education is a wonderful thing. If you couldn't sign your name, you'd have to pay cash."

~ Rita Mae Brown

"The real problem is not whether machines think but whether men do."

~ B.F. Skinner

We would like to hear from you! If you have an original quote or anecdote that you would like to share with other faculty about your teaching experiences here at HPU, please send them to the Teaching and Learning Center along with your name, your title, and your permission to publish it in the Po'okela.

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