Statements of Teaching Philosophy
by 2017 Recipients

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literature with the view of finding material that is understandable to students taking an introductory course in organic chemistry, and weaving such material into test questions

x Grading: I grade and return exams, which are comprised of short answer questions, by the next class period. I believe that the more time that passes between taking an exam and getting it back, the less value it has in reinforcing what students know and more importantly helping them understand what they thought they knew, but still need to work on. In assigning grades, I don't use either a % scale or a curve. When I grade exams, I grade each exam from beginning to end, and I take notes. I keep track of how I assign partial credit to help insure that I grade the exams uniformly, and when I finish grading each exam, I assess how I think the student did on the exam. If, for example, they knew most of the factual material, such as the definition of terms and names of compounds, and also showed some ability to apply what they knew, then I assess that they earned a B on the exam. I then add up the number of points they scored on the exam and write a note, e.g. "76 is a B." To get an A, a student has to demonstrate even more of an ability to apply the course material in their answers. When I finish grading I have what my students refer to as the "curve," which is the range of scores that I judged were A grades, B grades, etc. I emphasize to students that they are not competing against each other, but against my expectations. There is no pre-determined distribution of grades as there was for the grading curves I faced when I was an undergraduate. I once had a small section of CHEM 310 in which nobody made an A, and at the other extreme I once had a section of CHEM 311 in which half the class made either an A or an A-

Correcting the problem sets is a tremendous amount of work, but I have resisted writing answer keys to the problem sets because I want the experience of the problems to be more like doing problems on the exam in which you cannot consult an answer key to see how to do the problem if you get stuck.

x Mentoring: Each year I do research with one or two of the students who took organic chemistry the previous year. I see undergraduate research as another form of teaching, albeit one that is far more concentrated and time-consuming on a per student basis than teaching lecture and lab courses. An important aspect of directing undergraduate research is providing students the opportunity to determine if graduate school is an appropriate choice. To a lesser extent, a similar mentorship takes place in my laboratory courses, both with the students enrolled in the labs and with the teaching assistants, as it is in that I best get to know my students.

It is a great honor to have been selected a recipient of the Howard A. White Award for Teaching Excellence. When friends and family ask me why I enjoy my work, I reply that teaching is analogous to being a professional athlete or a performing artist; I get paid to do what I did as a kid for fun.

Theresa M. de los Santos
Assistant Professor of Communication
Seaver College

My central philosophy as a teacher is to actively engage and support students in their learning so that they may master material and use it purposefully in their daily lives and future careers. I accomplish this in the classroom by (1) using clear and engaging lectures and relevant, real-life examples that are constantly tailored to meet my students' interests and (2) setting a climate of collaboration, support, openness, pleasure, and humanity in which students are encouraged to actively participate and explore. Below, I describe my teaching approach and some tools I have developed to foster learning in my classes.

Mix of Engaging Lectures and Learning by Doing: I firmly believe that learning is most effective when it can be made personal and applied. My classes all include a mix of students first learning concepts, theories, and skills and then further engaging with them through hands-on application. To accomplish this, I use meticulously prepared lectures in the classroom that give students a foundation of information and knowledge. Then, in order to fully grasp the lecture material, my students do something with it. For instance, when I began teaching the undergraduate communication research methods course, I changed it to be a hands-on process in which students conduct their own empirical research. Prior to my teaching of the class, the main class project was a standard research proposal. In my class, as students learn the principles and language of social-science research, through a series of exercises designed, they apply them to their own research projects. In order to not overwhelm students, I follow a careful step-by-step process. I lecture on a new part of the research process and then students add it to their project. This process of learning by doing is rewarding for the students. At the end of the semester, they have a presentable work of original research and a deep understanding of the difficulties, opportunities, and ethical choices research presents. This teaching strategy and rhythm of

seeing the value of learning research methods. Thus, after my first semester of teaching the undergraduate level class, I led my colleagues in the implementation of a "Research in Action" guest speaker series for all of the ~300 students who take research methods each semester. There are two sessions designed for students to hear about how communication practitioners and academics rely on and use research methods in their careers. The series has so far included speakers from eHarmony, Fox Entertainment, Nielsen Media, The L.A. Unified School District, and a political consulting firm. On a smaller scale, in my research methods classes, when possible, I use real examples to teach concepts. For example, to demonstrate the importance of journalists and news consumers

Piece is very similar to the Career Interview, but it has my Journalism 241 students write a day-in-the-life profile news piece about the person they interviewed along with the analysis of their experience. Through these sorts of activities, I hope students leave my classrooms with a better sense of their higher purpose.

Mary Holden
Visiting Instructor of Physics
Seaver College

I am deeply honored to receive this prestigious award and truly grateful to have the support of the faculty and staff. I would not have been able to be successful without them. My class is rigorous and challenging for my students, and my colleagues are so inspiring and encouraging.

My philosophy is to challenge the students not only to learn but to carry what they learn with them for the rest of their lives. Different teaching styles are used to accomplish this. My introduction to physics begins with basic equations and concepts with a directive approach consistently highlighting to the students these basics are their template to solve any problem. Once they have mastered the basics I move to different problems and ask them to discuss the approach they use to solve. Demonstrations are important so they can see a principle and make a better connection. Finding ways to motivate them to be curious about their world not just what they need for my class I feel is the cornerstone of learning.

The ability to relate what they are learning to their lives allows them to embrace how they learn. I delegate the process to th a(ee a p)-(t)-6 (h)-( ) s tthe cornerscesse appyo -0.004h -0.004 3.2oaeso s to