

"For years I have told my students that I have been trying to train executives rather than clerks. The distinction between the two is parallel to the distinction previously made between understanding and knowledge... Knowledge must be assumed as given. But the vital thing is understanding. This requires possession of techniques that, fortunately, can be taught."

Carroll Quigley. *The Evolution of Civilizations*. 2nd ed. 1979. p. 420

Teaching, according to Jacques Barzun, is "developing in students the habit of withstanding the bitterness of novelty" in adjusting to new concepts and guiding them through this journey to understanding. The philosophy behind my teaching is to show the direction and equip students with essential tools and techniques in assimilating new knowledge.

As a teacher of developing minds, I deal with a range of students' study levels: freshmen, sophomore, junior and senior, balancing expectations with their individual capabilities and levels of preparedness. This requires imagination in finding ways to best bring my life experiences into the context of my interactions with students.

Creating necessary training materials is about structuring an entire curriculum targeted at enhancement of students' analytic capabilities, comprehending science behind new concepts, and setting free their imagination. Individual classes within this prospectus create building blocks of consistency and connectedness of the themes covered on the undergraduate level: one building block or support feature at a time.

Graduate student level instruction involves more active collaboration and interaction in identifying challenges and finding solutions while investigating different approaches to traditional solutions. This level of interaction may involve closer association with student efforts to grasp better understanding of a problem or require guided assistance in helping them approach the problem from a different angle.

Today's delivery of content-teaching takes on a new and technologically enlightened approach. Throughout my time as a college student, my professors did not use the Learning Management System (LMS) software tools common today (*they did not exist*). As I started teaching undergraduate classes in 2015, I availed myself to take classes, seminars, read publications, and interact through one-on-one opportunities with associates to learn how to amplify my pedagogical acumen.

I have incorporated the Blackboard Learn interface in each class I teach. Currently, I am teaching CoE-300, Natural Resource Ecology at WSU: I began class preparations several weeks ahead of the start of class. I prepared requisite background materials such as the syllabus, and structured class expectations for attendance, assignments, quizzes, field-work, and examinations. Organizing the learning process, I shape students' minds arriving in class with immediate understanding of their path to successful completion of the course. With the organizational structure in place they are better equipped to understand how this course fits into their overall college undergraduate career.

With the first assignment, on day one: "what is the name you like to be called?" I establish an initial connection with the student. Students can view a 7-minute video I made to introduce myself on the Blackboard class site: they can watch it at their leisure on their personal Smart Phone, tablet, laptop or desktop. Thus, valuable class time is saved: <https://youtu.be/cRa7qpSQalc>

The second assignment, made on day two, requests each student introduce themselves to me. They submit one-page summary through Blackboard as our 'community' association continues to evolve. The SoE-300 class hosting 100 students engages this personal-level connection from day one. Keeping the energy flow charged is enabled through Blackboard Learn, which I view as yet another success tool in my communication with each student.

When scoring tasks in the class, I address students by the name each prefers to be called, and I sign the scoring event with my name “Dr. Bill”. As students make Discussion Board comments addressed to other students, they are directed to address them by their names, individually, and sign their comments making the anonymous thread comments disappear. These ethics-compliant nuances of online behavior accentuate their professional maturation in the contemporary world of learning.

Based on the motto “from concrete to abstract”, I use current concepts as recognizable solid rocks to build the bridge to the bigger cluster of ideas in their minds, which I find critical in the assimilation of new knowledge. I prepare lecture notes made available to students before the beginning of each lecture, matched with audio/visual materials such as 15 to 75-minute training videos I make, slide shows, handouts and overheads. Students are motivated to cope with the lecture’s contents and get a walk-away record of the topics discussed. Lectures supported with visual aids and written materials are intended to form a mental link for their independent work.

Often students are guided to moments of truth through discussions of the associated concepts. Class time dedicated to discussions teach students the discipline of analytical thinking. Getting them involved in the process of reasoning in class develops their vocabulary and ability to reason in a consistent and respectful manner. With the content getting more complex and challenging, I transition to group work, and take-home projects, culminating with presentations and discussions with conclusions made.

I encourage students to “*start with what you know*” and then “*identify what you want to know*”. Filling the gap between the two points may become a creative process helping students to identify their most relevant problem-solving techniques.

While teaching undergraduate courses I have noticed student preparedness for the workforce of the 21st century mostly lacks widespread adoption of technological tools: they are mostly unaware of the free software made available to them, and simultaneously unaware of how to use it. I started helping them to use Style Sheets, Citation Manager, Reference Manager and help with formatting their secondary research papers into organized well-written documents.

I presented in a Blackboard Learn platform “*Tech Tools for Student Success*” having vetted almost 100 YouTube videos and created dozens more to demonstrate software use for student tasks. These tools include Microsoft Office Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Access, plus other freeware programs such as Audacity and MySQL.

My students learned to migrate their class presentations made in PowerPoint with their digitally mastered audio narration to YouTube videos. For this purpose, I created several videos on this platform: all videos are “Americans with Disabilities Act” (ADA) compliant.

PowerPoint presentations with student scripted audio, migrated to YouTube videos, has proven an effective method of motivating students’ participation. This engaging exposure to gain new skills in their technological awareness has become - in my experience as a teacher - a measure of their very personal success and such fun to accomplish. Most of my students welcomed this challenge and fully embraced the experience as a tangible reality of success having overcome the challenges and extra work associated with the task.

After class grading is completed, I invite the accomplished students to join “The Achievement Team” I created by writing a letter of advice to future students in my classes. Their term reports and YouTube videos are displayed in the Blackboard Learn portal of each class I teach along with letters of advice to their future colleagues. Reputation of this cadre of achievers has spread across campus to capture the attention of students from other disciplines. My classes formed a catalyst of achievement attractive to students coming to college to learn new ways of thinking.

Coming to my classes, international students have been given the option to record the audio narration of their YouTube video term-report presentation in their native language, while making subtitles in both their native tongue and English. They all have taken this challenge and made videos of their term report as described. It became a source of pride and measure of personal accomplishment. "They got it."

This is my classroom: I take responsibility for my students' successes and failures. My students often called me their mentor of which I am honored. Their path of success will extend far beyond my portion of educational training has been concluded. Which makes me think that just like life itself, their education and with them, my education, is not a point of destination, but the road travelled.

My students call me, Dr. Bill.