

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

for Derek R. Lane, Ph.D.

Trust. Cooperation. Support. Mutual Respect. These are the four fundamental features of the optimal learning environment that allow me to make connections with and for my students. The key contribution I make as an undergraduate educator (which originates from my attitude about students and the key role communication plays in the teaching and learning process) is the innovative teaching technique I have been fortunate to share with my students and colleagues throughout the academy. *I genuinely enjoy and greatly benefit from teaching.* For me, helping students to understand the theory and application of communication in multiple contexts always leads to an improved clarity and sense of renewal in my own personal development as an educator, researcher, and student of communication science. I value the importance of communication in the teaching and learning process. I have often argued that the difference between knowing and teaching *is* communication. I view the classroom as the crucible of knowledge and inquiry from which teachers and students emerge as both better teachers and better students. The curriculum I teach challenges students to observe and explain human communication phenomena from multiple social scientific perspectives.

My teaching goals include the following: To expose the students to new ideas—making them responsible and accountable for their learning; To impart new skills and generate some excitement on their part, motivating them to *master* the material; To illustrate new ideas and develop skills by analyzing as many interesting examples and applications as possible; To give the students a framework for following up on new ideas and skills, either on their own or in subsequent course work; To engage the students with the course material so that they understand the theory and principles

behind each concept, and then challenge the students to process and *apply* their new knowledge. I teach in order to serve the students and to strengthen my own knowledge by *learning from my students*. It is through my teaching and student questioning that my students and I have grown and developed academically. The enthusiasm generated in my classes by students is contagious. As a result of their enthusiasm, I have had the opportunity to collaborate with several colleagues within our college and across the campus (e.g. Engineering, Interior Design, Mathematics, Economics) in both undergraduate and graduate classrooms.

I am also an advocate of the use of technology and instructional web pages as teaching tools. I have created web pages for most of my courses and I use them extensively in my teaching (www.uky.edu/~drlane). Over the past few years I have relied heavily on Blackboard as a technological interface—while maintaining course websites on the university servers. I encourage increased outside contact between my students and me. I promote active learning techniques that help students to develop reciprocity and cooperation while allowing me to provide students with frequent opportunities to apply what they have learned and to receive feedback on their learning progress. I emphasize time on task and communicate high expectations but maintain a high level of respect for diverse talents and ways of learning.

My graduate courses allow me the opportunity to mentor students as I present a more inclusive view of what it means to be a scholar and encourage graduate students to recognize that knowledge is acquired through *research*, through *synthesis*, through *practice*, and through *teaching*. This perspective of scholarship is consistent with Boyer's (1990) *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* where he argues that the four broad categories of scholarship (*discovery*, *integration*, *engagement*, and *teaching*) dynamically interact to form an interdependent whole.

I have the reputation of being demanding—but fair. I set high expectations for my teaching and my students. Both graduate and undergraduate students alike are successful because they understand I expect and will accept only their best work. Students learn quickly that their success is a logical outcome of doing things well. It is because students are successful that I have been recognized for my teaching.

I recognize that while I have much to offer my students, I also have a significant amount to learn from them as well. Teaching allows me to be a positive professional role-model as well as a student. I contribute to graduate education at the University of Kentucky through my mentoring and a more inclusive view of what it means to be a communication scholar. Communication is the crucial link between a knowledgeable teacher and students who are able to learn. Making connections begins with trust, cooperation, support, and mutual respect.