

Teaching Philosophy Karen C. Barr

Learn-Obstacles-Victory-Energize. Students come to my classroom to learn. Many times they encounter obstacles. With my assistance, they can overcome obstacles and be empowered with a sense of victory. This process, the core of my teaching philosophy, is what energizes me. I love teaching. As the leader in my classroom, much like the leader of a business, I realize my students, like employees, are very diverse with various strengths and weaknesses. I encourage students to embrace the love of learning and to become creative and independent thinkers. I inspire students to appreciate their new knowledge and value high standards of quality. I challenge students with a wide variety of creative pedagogical strategies such as in-class discussions, practice problems, quizzes and exams, case analysis, role-playing, team-building exercises, workshops, oral presentations, computer-based learning, and group projects. My classroom culture is open and I emphasize academic integrity, mutual respect, and diversity. I try to make students see it is not only important to get good grades, but it is also important to think of the class as a place to learn about life, not just the information in the books, but how to work together in a group, how to respect each other, and how to improve the skills necessary to be a successful person, not only in business, but in life. I am a coach, helping them to realize that struggling through a difficult course and being successful will put them closer to their long range goal of obtaining a degree. My door is always open and I am always available. I encourage students to talk to me in person, call me or text me if they have a question or problem. I do my best to tailor and customize my courses to meet each student's individual needs.

My teaching philosophy can also be observed by my efforts in student recruitment and retention activities. Prior to the first day of class, I assist freshman students through FTCAP and participate in New Student Day. As I evaluate each student's test scores, read through their files and personally meet with them, I begin to get a sense of who they are and what their strengths and weaknesses are. In 2001, I prepared to deliver the First Year Seminar course for business students at my campus. The small class size not only promotes friendly and lively class discussions on college survival skills, academic rigor, major requirements, technology, academic integrity and career development, it provides the students with access to a caring, easily approachable and knowledgeable faculty member. Over the years, I have continuously improved not only this course, but every course I regularly teach. I embrace technology and feel it can be an effective tool if used properly. I now have lecture notes, quizzes, and drop boxes on angel for student use, I advise through Elion along with the student, and I communicate through webmail which is the venue often used by the students. I have also integrated LIAS in every project I assign in my courses. I have re-designed my lecture notes as PowerPoint presentations and I have added checkpoints throughout the course to evaluate student progress and offer feedback on projects. As part of my philosophy of providing students with additional creative and challenging opportunities, I have offered honors options to select students when requested.

Online learning and technology has made a significant impact in education today. While developing and delivering two courses for the World Campus, I extensively researched every topic in every chapter to "find" the best way to present difficult subject matter. I researched articles on current events in order to incorporate accurate, real-world examples to help students understand the theory. I utilized a variety of academic and discipline based sources and found several pedagogical resources dealing with online teaching. Through this process, I learned a great deal about electronic course management systems, websites, and problems students may face when taking an online course. I have been very pleased over the last 8 years with the outcome of these courses and believe students receive the same value as the traditional student.

With over 19 years of teaching college students, my passion to help another human being has not faded. I love walking into the classroom, like an actor on a stage knowing I may need to be creative, energetic, humorous, or serious to let them know I am there for them and together we will get through it. I love my job because I contribute to the transformation of a nervous, insecure freshman into a PSU graduate that is secure, mature and ready to go out into the world and make a difference. The ultimate pat on the back is watching students cross the stage at commencement.