

## **2019 'Exemplary' Overall Instructional Narrative**

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[Carie](#) has graciously offered to answer any question you might have.

#### **Introduction**

I am grateful that each year the PAR process gives me an opportunity to reflect on the successes, opportunities and challenges I have faced as a residential faculty member at Mesa Community College. The observations and evaluations of my students, colleagues and leaders are an extremely valuable part of that process. This year, I was honored to have Michael Voss, Dean of Career and Technical Education visit my classroom, Dr. Linda Collins, Chair of the Business and Information Systems Department, evaluate and discuss one of my online classes with me, and my mentor Preston Cameron observe me and make recommendations as to how I can improve my teaching. Most importantly, I have carefully read through the evaluations submitted by my students in online, hybrid and face-to-face classes. While their feedback is largely positive and I am both appreciative and humbled by that, I have also identified some areas that provide opportunities for improvement. I do feel as though their comments, critiques and commendations accurately reflect my abilities and performance as an instructor.

#### **Connecting with Students to Improve Retention**

One of my main objectives this past year has been to better connect with the students in my classes. While the student evaluation results indicate that I am "helpful," "sweet and understanding" and a "great teacher," students do not typically state that they have very much contact with me outside of the classroom. I would like these numbers to improve. I want to have more contact with students not only to answer questions about course content but also to keep them engaged in the class. I think having a connection with the instructor keeps students more focused and current on their assignments, which decreases the likelihood they will end up withdrawing from the class.

I asked my mentor, Preston Cameron, to share some ideas on encouraging students to make contact with me outside of class. He suggested, "...enforce an office hour appointment and reward these students with a nominal extra credit award." This coming year I plan to implement this – not only for face-to-face students who can come to my office for an appointment, but for online students who can either come to the office if they are on campus or attend a "virtual office hour" using "Cranium Café," "Skype," "Google Hangouts" or any other technology platform that makes them feel comfortable. I hope that once they have spoken with me outside of the real or virtual classroom, they will find that I am a concerned and caring individual who truly wants them to succeed and will go out of my way to help them.

#### **Demonstrating Compassion to Help Students Succeed**

Last spring, I noticed that a student who had been regularly attending class suddenly stopped coming and submitted only a very few assignments through Canvas. I reached out to her and she responded, indicating that she was going to drop the class because she could not keep up with the workload. I offered to help and she came to my office the next day. Once there, and after a few minutes of talking about things other than coursework, she revealed that she had been struggling with depression and did not have the motivation or energy it would take to come to class. I shared some experiences I have had involving family and friends and I could sense that she began to trust me. I remembered another new faculty member who started the same year I did in the counseling department. We arranged for her to receive some counseling and I offered to adjust some due dates if she would regularly come to class. She finished the course

with an excellent grade and I will always remember the sense of satisfaction and accomplishment I felt simply because I was able to help.

This experience touched me so profoundly that I wanted to do more. I made a conscious effort to listen more carefully, sympathize more, change more due dates, and grant more exceptions than ever before. I have tried to accommodate students who are struggling with the death of family members, depression, loss of employment or difficult work schedules, athletic eligibility, and financial problems. I have put my own copy of our textbook on reserve at the library, accompanied a student to her first counseling session, met repeatedly with a group of students struggling to speak English and having difficulty learning vocabulary words, written letters of recommendation and reviewed resumes to help students get jobs. I have sent more emails offering encouragement than ever before and have tried to compliment students on their work at least as often as I have been critical of their mistakes. One student described me as having "Great knowledge, passion for teaching and a lot of empathy for students." and Dr. Collins said "Carie continues to provide quality student service to her students through a variety of methods and she is extremely accommodating and sensitive to student needs. This area of the evaluation is BETTER THAN EXCELLENT."

It is my sincere belief that an instructor who cares about the whole student by demonstrating understanding and compassion, will have fewer students who withdraw from their classes and resign themselves to an attitude of failure. While I have not seen significant improvement the statistics as of yet, I do believe it will happen. I will continue going out of my way to reach students who are struggling. I know that this means some will try to take advantage of me, but if it helps only one student accomplish the goals they may have otherwise abandoned, it will be well worth it. As my PARC team noted last year, "You are clearly dedicated to helping students succeed."

### **Encouraging Student Engagement through Group Work**

One of my overall goals as an instructor has been to make sure that students are engaged in my face-to-face classes. I have had a tremendous level of success using Nearpod, an interactive app that allows students to bring my slideshow presentations up on their cellphones, draw pictures, respond to polling questions and demonstrate their knowledge by responding to quiz questions. Dean Voss said in his evaluation, "Your use of Nearpod is a best practice that you should share with your colleagues." The letter from my PARC team last year acknowledged that as well saying, "the committee was impressed with your efforts to facilitate student engagement, while encouraging ownership of engagement on the part of the students."

I want to continue to build on this by introducing even more variety to my classroom presentations. In business communications classes I have successfully used group projects, presentations and in-class research to accomplish this goal. One of my students said about that class, "Please maintain your high level of engagement and interesting course presentation." In a class such as business law however, it is difficult to get students not only interacting with me but with their fellow students. While I have made a great deal of progress in this area as Dean Voss acknowledged, "The balance of instructor facilitated and hands-on learning activities in small groups is effective. Students who are actively engaged with their learning demonstrate critical thinking" I feel there is even more I can do.

Preston Cameron had several good ideas on how I might be able to bring some variety into my classroom presentations by using group work. I have already implemented at least two of his ideas 1) having groups "research and pres(ent) on a specialized topic (lecturing to the lecturer)" and 2) "case presentations (which may take the form of mock trials)." I found that the students

enjoyed these activities tremendously and when I assessed their understanding those topics at a later time, their ability to synthesize what they had learned was much better than their average. Dr. Collins noted, "The activities she has designed provide critical thinking opportunities and the activities are current and meaningful."

### **Civic Engagement and MCC's 4Cs**

Ever since I was introduced to the "4C's Assessment" initiative as an adjunct at MCC, I have been encouraging my students to be "civically engaged." I developed some assignments and projects that I have since reviewed and revised to better reflect the needs, talents and abilities of my students. While some have been complimentary other students have seen my efforts as "artificial" or "unrealistic" saying that these assignments do not reflect course competencies and are simply busy work to put me in compliance with college requirements.

This year I have made a particular effort to make sure students understand the relevance of political and social civic engagement to the business law curriculum. I have attempted to "lead by example" and do more community service and become more politically active and aware myself. I invited the Center for Civil Engagement staff to come and talk to my students about registering to vote and participating in upcoming elections. I shared real-life examples more frequently showing examples of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) than ever before and talked about my personal experiences both on the giving and receiving end of social and political activity. I talk frequently about my past service on community boards like the Design Review Board and Board of Adjustments in the City of Mesa and how my understanding of business law made me a better public servant.

While I am careful to try not to influence students on political issues or have them reveal their political ideals, students this year seemed much more receptive of civic engagement as an important aspect of the business law class. More than ever as they watch meetings of the state legislature or city council, they have come up with ideas for ways businesses can help influence political policies and processes. I have definitely seen an improvement in this area and plan to continue progressing as an example of a "civically engaged" and educated citizen.

### **Opportunities**

Even though the evaluations of my supervisors, mentors and students are very complimentary and supportive, I have a desire to continue to improve and see some areas where this is possible. As I review my student evaluations and see that most students "strongly agree" that I present the information clearly, more than I an acceptable number simply "agree" and a few even "disagree." I will continue to refine my classroom and online presentations and ask students for even more feedback to make sure the information I am presenting is clear and easier to understand.

Some of their comments also indicate that there is "too much material" for them to learn in my course. While I am committed to maintaining the rigor of my courses and the high level of expectation I have for my students, I will continue to evaluate the course content and make sure that everything presented is a necessary part of the student's learning. Business law in particular is a challenging course but students should not feel overwhelmed by the material and that will continue to be my goal.

I also see an opportunity to become a leader at MCC and mentor my colleagues as well as my students. Dr. Collins' evaluation mentions, "I am hoping [that] Carie will consider running for business OPD in the fall. She is very committed to academic excellence and is attentive to details and quality coursework." As an instructor I can improve the experience of my students

but as a leader I can help others refine and improve their teaching to benefit their students as well. The widening of this sphere of influence is something I look forward to and wholeheartedly intend to pursue.