

Overall Instructional Narrative by Jennifer Fay

Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) Team

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Introduction

I have gained a great deal from the PAR process, as I have been afforded the opportunity to reflect on my pedagogical approach in collaboration with two outstanding colleagues, for whom I have tremendous respect. The insight they have provided has been incredibly valuable and has ranged from furnishing fresh ideas for further increasing student engagement to validating some of the new teaching approaches I have begun utilizing after reading the book "The Power of Problem-Based Learning" and completing the Gold Star training program.

I am humbled by all of the positive evaluations and feedback I have received from my dean, chair, mentors and students. Like my fellow instructors, I spend a fair amount of time refining my approach to the teaching and learning endeavor in order to ensure the success of my students both within and beyond my classroom. The positive feedback I have received over the last year is the highest reward I could possibly receive for these efforts.

Identified Strengths

A number of broad themes emerge from the evaluations and feedback I have received over the course of this last academic year. Frequently my students, colleagues and supervisors utilized the following words and phrases to describe my approach to teaching and learning: "enthusiastic", "excellent attitude towards students", "helpful", "understanding", "engaging", "interactive" and "clear". I believe my enthusiasm and "excellent attitude towards students" are a direct reflection of the fact that I truly love the career I have chosen, and cannot imagine doing anything else. Moreover, as I mentioned in my philosophy on teaching and learning, I believe positive learning environments foster student learning. In order to establish a positive learning environment, I take the time to get to know my students' specific needs by interacting with them both in and outside of the classroom, whether it be during an in-class activity, office hours or extracurricular activities such as the Exercise Science Club. Feedback indicating I am "helpful" and "understanding" are likely the result of my efforts to seek out students who may be struggling and provide them with the assistance they need to be successful in my course and beyond.

I believe phrases like "engaging", "interactive" and "clear" reflect the purposeful changes I have made to my approach to teaching and learning over the last five years. Through the reading of books such as "The Power of Problem-Based Learning", I have gradually evolved from a "sage on the stage" to more of a "guide on the side", incorporating active learning experiences (e.g. case studies, hands-on laboratories, problem-based learning activities, etc.) in all of my courses. In these activities, students are fully engaged in the learning endeavor, interacting with the content in a more meaningful way and taking responsibility for their own learning. Additionally, following Gold Star training, I began refining my courses to improve alignment between course objectives, activities, readings and assessments. And lastly, I have taken advantage of the many opportunities Canvas has to offer to enhance my face-to-face meetings with my students, communicating with students through the announcement and e-mail

features, posting grades to the grade book application, and developing content pages complete with unit objectives, instructional videos, animations, further readings, online learning activities (e.g. quizlet.com, Canvas quizzes and Canvas surveys) and the like.

Identified Areas for Improvement

As can be seen from the evaluations provided in this IDP, my chair and dean did not cite any areas for improvement. Moreover, my mentors and students provided a great deal of positive feedback. However, as mentioned in the opening of my IDP, I believe effective teachers recognize that the teaching and learning endeavor is a journey. Thus, no matter how well I perform in the eyes of my supervisors, mentors and students, I am continually seeking new ways to improve upon my pedagogical approach.

Consequently, my goal for the upcoming academic year is to re-evaluate my courses, particularly EXS 101 (the course for which the majority of my evaluations were conducted), ensuring I have effectively identified the fundamental concepts of the content, utilized assessments that align with these fundamental concepts and employed activities that engage students with the concepts in multiple and varied ways, minimizing lecturing time. These goals align well with the feedback received on my fall student evaluations. Although the majority of my students rated my ability to align exams with course content as "excellent", a handful of students indicated I am "above average", and therefore not yet deserving of an "excellent" rating. Moreover, a few students indicated I could provide even more hands-on activities and reduce lecturing time even further. In order to accomplish the re-evaluation of EXS 101, I will seek guidance from the talented staff in the Center for Teaching and Learning and in books on backward design (such as "Understanding by Design Guide to Creating High Quality Units" by G. Wiggins & J. McTighe)