

J. Burton Browning, Ed.D.
Teaching Philosophy

"Far and away the best prize that life offers is the chance to work hard at work worth doing."
Theodore Roosevelt

As a scholar, researcher, and life-long learner part of my life work is to offer students a chance to increase their knowledge and be exposed to cutting-edge technologies that will improve their learning experience and help them in the world of work. Of any work I have performed, being a professor is of the most value and highest worth.

It is of the greatest importance to me to work with each student to help them achieve their potential. So much color can be added to life with a solid educational grounding. In fact the very freedom we enjoy could be threatened by a society of "followers" who are not able to think and question. An educated population, and one that thinks critically and questions is our best path as a nation. How many wonderful innovations and inventions have been created just by a creative soul questioning the status quo and daring to try something different.

I try to work with student strengths and weaknesses, to challenge each student, and keep their career goals in mind. For example, when I work with graduate student teachers, I work more towards helping them help their students (if that is their goal). However, with undergraduates, if aligned with their career path, I work with them on more functional goals such as career and life skills.

It is interesting to note however, that with both groups, I work very hard to increase my students critical thinking skills, instill an understanding for life-long learning, model team work and problem solving approaches, and try to impart talents necessary to function effectively in our modern economy. As an example, one of the technology topics I discuss in various formats in my technology courses is related to security, a topic of national importance, that is often left out by professors today.

I have found that when students become personally engaged with presented material and perceive the subject matter to be directly relevant to their lives, transformative learning is most likely to occur. In this way I try to work with student's diverse learning styles and when possible reference student experiences to enhancing the learning experience. This varies based on: (1) age of student, (2) nature of course (graduate or undergraduate level), (3) and nature of material (low level or upper level. Each offers a unique opportunity and I take something of value away from each course I teach. If we are not growing everyday, something is wrong.

I am a firm believer that students must ultimately take responsibility for their own learning and have ownership of the two-way educational process. In fact I was instrumental in amending our code of conduct for students at Brunswick Community College to include a statement such as this. Suffice to say I do practice what I say.

Learning about the students I teach and listening to their experiences has helped me to consider ways of making my course material relevant to them and building critical thinking skills. In many ways, learning is a complex process that is very individual, context, and content specific. Again, I am very sensitive to these factors and strive to be flexible and adapt

my approaches according to the needs of learners, subject matter, and context.

I use a variety of delivery methods and techniques when teaching as appropriate to the course and student level. Most include the use of humor and technology such as Power Point, interactive white boards, and screen broadcasting. Other methods I incorporate include time-tested techniques such as: research papers, creative projects, individual problem solving activities, homework, team-oriented problem solving activities, hands-on projects, readings, tests, and field trips. Two other important items I try to incorporate at all levels is fostering a team spirit in which students can work/help each other, and having students present a lesson (either formally or informally depending on context and content). I feel this is invaluable experience for the workplace, and as such is probably more important than the content they are learning and presenting.

In any teaching context, I work to promote student responsibility for learning by asking each individual what they will contribute to the class and how each person can participate in creating a classroom environment that is stimulating and respectful of diverse views and experiences. I explain to students that this is a two-way experience and both student and professor play a 50% role in a 100% positive experience.

This 100% positive experience seems to be working for me so far. I have received several awards and high evaluations from: (1) UNC-W students for "Professor who most influenced their college career"; (2) Lesley University supervisor based on student evaluations; and (3) Brunswick Community College evaluations by students and my supervisor. It appears to me that a genuine interest in student success coupled with the use of current topics does prevail. I have had students gain successful employment, receive grant funding, and change careers with success. To continue this path, I work on scholarly endeavors such as book writing, articles, presentations, and improving my literary and technical knowledge. Considering that I am currently in a non-tenure track position, I feel my research agenda is aggressive to say the least.

A statement I am fond of saying is "there is so much to learn and so little time." To me, never has there been a truer statement. There are not many areas that don't interest me and I consider myself to be a bit of a renaissance man in that I am as interested in Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" as I am with one of the technology textbooks I am writing. To me all knowledge is of value. Can it all be applied to a career? Perhaps not, but it does, as I stated earlier, "add color to life" and a life without color, or shades of gray, is a life misspent in my opinion.

I work diligently, as my high student evaluations from three major universities and colleges document, to help students increase their knowledge. My track record proves that my scholarly interests, and focus on my students success, work with each other to form a complete whole and make me a successful professor.