The ToolBox

A Framework for Teaching and Learning

In this issue of *The ToolBox*, we will look at a framework for analyzing and understanding the processes of teaching and learning as related to millennial learners. It is proposed that a well-rounded, comprehensive, teaching and learning experience simultaneously reaches two objectives: 1) The teacher creates and delivers learning experiences that motivate and engage learners while also addressing specifically identified outcomes, and 2) The learner gains new knowledge, skills, and dispositions that can later be recalled, used, and demonstrated in a variety of settings, contexts, and situations. Achieving these two important goals define the art and craft of what we endeavor to do in higher education.

The components of teaching and learning in higher education is a delicate balance of several interactive and mutually dependent dimensions. On page 2 of *The ToolBox* you are invited to consider a series of reflective questions designed to explore each of these dimensions and the degree to which they are part of your classroom instruction. It is important for each of us to consider ways to strengthen various dimensions of our teaching repertoire.

Acquisition
New knowledge, skills and dispositions

Association
Interactions and relationships with faculty across settings and circumstances

Assessment
Quantitative and qualitative analysis of student learning

Application
Learning experiences that extend learning beyond the classroom

Atmosphere
Cultural expectations and required evidence for excellence in teaching and learning

Reflective Questions on the Dimensions of Teaching and Learning

Consider the following questions as they relate to the teaching and learning students are engaged in while in your classroom. These questions are intended to provide a format for reflection and the identification of areas in which pedagogy could be enhanced and strengthened.

Atmosphere: It is important for faculty members to be sensitive to learning and performance expectations that are prevalent in their respective professional disciplines, in the academy at-large, and at the institutional and departmental levels.
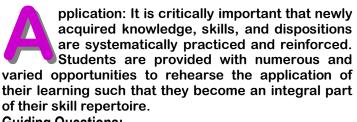
Guiding Questions:

- What are the implicit and explicit expectations that this institution has for student excellence in learning?
- How do my classroom practices prepare students for their chosen areas of study and eventual employment and professional expertise and impact?
- Does the institution foster an environment that encourages inquiry and instructional "risk taking?"

Acquisition: At the most basic level, teaching and learning is focused on the acquisition of new knowledge, skills, and dispositions. This is accomplished through assigned reading, lecture, demonstration, the use of technology, and classroom interaction.

Guiding Questions:

- Can I articulate the specifically identified outcomes that students are expected to achieve at the program and course levels ?
- Am I consistently using a variety of teaching strategies that engage my students and promote their involvement in the learning process?
- What are the criteria that I use to determine whether chosen instructional strategies are appropriate and effective?

Application: It is critically important that newly acquired knowledge, skills, and dispositions are systematically practiced and reinforced. Students are provided with numerous and varied opportunities to rehearse the application of their learning such that they become an integral part of their skill repertoire.

Guiding Questions:

- Do currently available data indicate that, at the institutional and departmental levels, students are demonstrating the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for successful entry into the employment market?
- What types of guided practice do I provide for my students?
- Are there ongoing, direct, and relevant connections made between my chosen instructional content and the student's frames of reference.

- Do students have an expectation that the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that they are acquiring can and should be applied in settings and circumstances beyond my classroom and this course?

Assessment: Evaluation strategies are intended to determine whether chosen instructional strategies are having the intended impact on student learning and the degree to which course outcomes are being achieved.

Guiding Questions:

- Do students have access to a variety of means for demonstrating their learning (i.e., different strategies and the opportunity to choose)?
- Are assessment strategies designed in a manner that promote higher level thinking (e.g., application, analysis synthesis, evaluation)?
- Do I provide students with specific feedback that will extend their learning?
- Are assessment strategies valid and reliable?

Association: There is significant value in providing students with opportunities to engage in dialogue and relationships with faculty outside the classroom setting (e.g., collaborative research, service-learning, and informal dialogues).

Guiding Questions:

- What opportunities do I provide for students to engage in learning and service experiences outside my classroom setting?
- Are there ongoing opportunities to engage in informal conversations and build relationships?