

A colleague recently asked me “what do you want your students to get from your teaching?” My gut response was “everything.” However, as I pondered this, I realized it is not about the “everything” but instead about the “somethings” that you really care about in **TEACHING**.

First and foremost, I want my students to **T**hink. Not memorize, not mimic, but really think. Currently, in my invertebrate class, students create weekly quizzes and must decide the emphasis critically considering the role of that information. Learning to think means recognizing strengths and weaknesses and learning to criticize constructively. I often use primary literature discussions to emphasize these skills. On a related note, I want my students to know the importance of **E**xperimentation. We teach who we are. I am a scientist and rely on a method of inquiry. In ecology, however, few set protocols exist for testing ideas. More often than not, one faces the need to try something else. This is also true of teaching styles and I use frequently use different styles (lectures, debates, discussions, etc...). I believe the value of experimentation for students extends far outside the classroom into research experiences, study abroad or even a new career direction. I want students, and myself, to not be afraid to experiment. My recent 26-day research trip with a student to Uruguay illustrated that you never know where experimentation can take you. I also want my students to feel a sense of **A**ccomplishment. From Day 1, I stress that they need to continually engage in my courses. I expect active participation. I require a number of assignments that measure different skills or appeal to different kinds of students. At times, it may seem overwhelming. However, I think when students look back on all they have done, they do come away with a sense of accomplishment, especially true for my research students. I hope sense of accomplishment that extends further than just the grade they earned.

This desire for accomplishment relates to my next want – that students face a **C**hallenge. Teaching for me is the quintessential balance act between maintaining high standards without losing realistic expectations. However, I have found that students rise to the challenge with encouraged persistence, training, and the appropriate safety nets. Experience allows me to refine the safety nets for different courses to maintain realism, perhaps only counting 4 out of 5 attempts toward a grade, allowing revisions, or taking complex ideas in small steps or using examples that appeal to students. For instance, I use Barnum Animal Crackers to teach statistics to my Ecology course and chocolate bars to teach about systematics and speciation. The challenge of the material still exists, I have just tried to find ways in which to provide appropriate guides.

Although I do focus on some skill training, I want students to also come away with a **H**olistic view of how the world works. In Environmental Science, we discuss the conflicts between science and policy, the economics of valuing natural resources, and the need for interdisciplinary thinking. As an organismal biologist, I teach the tenets of biophilia (from E.O. Wilson) that suggest connections to representations of life across the disciplines from art to psychology to religion help students connect the technical aspects of biology with their daily existence. On a personal note, I want students to know that I subscribe to the person-centered Jesuit tradition of teaching and I recognize students as **I**ndividuals, all with different needs, aspirations, challenges and constraints. I am always available to meet and advise students and be responsive to their individual circumstances. In terms of what I teach, I want students to learn something **N**ew. I make conscious efforts to update information and introduce examples that do not appear in texts. In addition, through different projects, I try to get students to branch out and discover something novel. In conclusion with respect to teaching, I want students to know that my intentions are **G**enuine. I am at Southwestern because it is where I want to be. I love coming to work every day. I work hard to give my best efforts. I want every moment in class to count. I find great satisfaction in watching my students achieve things they may have not thought possible. The outcomes of **TEACHING** are infinite. Education expert Parker J. Palmer (1998) writes “the imprint of good teaching remains long after the facts they have given us have faded.” Therefore, to summarize my answer to “what I want students to get?”, I want that longevity.