

Teaching Statement

A primary motivation among students in the higher education setting is to develop and express workplace competencies. I believe it is incumbent upon educators to first define and then elaborate on the skills and aptitudes employers hope to discover. The capacity for understanding content, communication and corporate culture become increasingly important as more exchanges take place online and in the cloud. A recent *New York Times* article* notes that industry looks to higher educational systems to provide leaner and perhaps “meaner” graduates who can do more than simply access information but to be able to apply it to specific business problems.

The question then becomes how to teach students to deal with ambiguity and express flexibility and professionalism, in addition to content knowledge. I believe this informal instruction is accomplished as an embedded process that occurs simultaneous to formalized instruction. In my teaching experience I build in multiple activities to provide students with opportunities to articulate where they are within their zone of proximal development. This is accomplished by guided reflections in which students are asked to reflect on specific questions. For example, writing prompts for students to consider ethical decision-making, team dynamics, or real-world examples taken from current events help students generate ideas about how they might react. The practice of articulating their reactions help shape preliminary responses, and then when brought into larger group discussions, students may further refine their thinking. Embedding respectful methods for listening and speaking within groups, “workshopping” ideas for projects and research, and establishing practices for negotiating debate and disagreement are ways classroom experience can help produce the seasoned professionals industry wants.

Other teaching goals that drive my syllabi include the generalized concern I have for students’ information literacy. Generally speaking, students certainly know how to Google to find information on the Internet. Yet, so often the ability to discern the validity of what is found, or the ability to look more deeply into scholarly databases appears to be lacking for many. Understanding primary and secondary sources, evaluating online resources for inaccuracies or biases, and developing an information literacy awareness are important for critical thinking, academic research and synthesizing what we learn. While information literacy has been a goal for quite some time, as the Internet continues to evolve and new devices for accessing resources expands, changing attitudes and differing approaches need to evolve alongside those pathways.

*Tugend, A. “What it takes to make new college graduates employable.” *New York Times*, June 28, 2013.