GOOD TEACHING: THE TOP TEN REQUIREMENTS

By Richard Leblanc, York University, Ontario

This article appeared in *The Teaching Professor* after Professor Leblanc won a Seymour Schulich Award for Teaching Excellence including a $10,000 cash award. Reprinted here with permission of Professor Leblanc, October 8, 1998.

Two. Good teaching is about substance and treating students as consumers of knowledge. It's about doing your best to keep on being current in your own discipline, keeping up with the latest developments, giving them the best advice, the best direction, and having the patience to give them help and to listen to feedback from them.

Three. Good teaching is about listening, questioning, being responsive, and remembering that each student and class is different. It's about understanding their backgrounds, taking into account all the various factors and circumstances that make them the individuals they are, and recognizing the importance of their experiences and the contributions they can make to one another.

Four. Good teaching is about not always having a fixed agenda and being rigid, but being flexible, fluid, experimenting, and adapting your style to the needs and interests of the class and the students themselves.

Five. Good teaching is also about style. Should good teaching be entertaining? You bet! Does this mean that it lacks in substance? Absolutely not! It must have both substance and style. It's important that the professor is the conductor and the class is the orchestra. All students play different instruments and at varying proficiencies.

Six. This is very important -- good teaching is about humor. It's about being self-deprecating and not taking yourself too seriously. It's about making a class more fun and enjoyable. It's about making the students feel more comfortable and relaxed and making learning a pleasurable experience. It's also important to remember that good humor will make the students relax, and in a more relaxed atmosphere, you can learn better and make better progress.

Seven. Good teaching is about caring, nurturing, and developing minds and talents. It's about devoting time, often invisible, to student development. It's about often working long hours of grading, designing or redesigning courses, and preparing materials to still further enhance instruction.

Eight. Good teaching is supported by strong and visionary leadership, and very tangible institutional support -- resources, facilities, and personnel. It's about having the vision and support to see teaching a top priority, and for this vision to be reflected in what is said, but more importantly by what is done.

Nine. Good teaching is about mentoring between senior and junior faculty, teamwork, and being recognized and promoted by one's colleagues. It's about good teaching being rewarded and valued. Good teaching should also be rewarded, and poor teaching needs to be remediated through training and development programs.

Ten. At the end of the day, good teaching is about having fun, experiencing pleasure and intrinsic rewards. It's about doing what you love, doing what you would do regardless of whether you were paid or not, doing it because you enjoy it, and doing it because you are good at it. Good teachers couldn't imagine doing anything else.

http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/topten.htm