Daniel R. Schmehl- Philosophy of Teaching

Teaching is my passion. I truly enjoy interacting with students both inside and out of the classroom. I am eager to instruct students in the classroom, as well as several extracurricular teaching activities, including conferences, undergraduate research mentoring, and invited guest lectures. My role as a teacher is to facilitate learning for an individual or a group of students through enthusiastic and edifying teaching.

I feel the key to effective teaching is enthusiasm. Excitement in the classroom stems from my own excitement for the course. I continually find amazement in science; this is conveyed to my students through my teaching. If I am not excited, it is hard to imagine excitement and inspiration to blossom in the classroom. I have a love for teaching and for inspiring each student in my classroom. Enthusiasm inspires my students to take full grasp of the course material and encourages recollection of what was learned. Being in the field of entomology, experiencing the context of insect habitats, behavior, and physiology is integral to a comprehensive understanding. Therefore I am a very strong advocate for integrating the classroom with the field (what is outside the classroom). Integration of the field with the classroom complements my labs, lectures and assignments, conveys enthusiasm, and increases its effectiveness by getting students excited.

Another priority is to ensure intellectual improvement for every student entering into my classroom. Each student who steps in the classroom is at a different point in their intellectual growth. I make every attempt to integrate student's majors and interests into the course material to help every student see the relevance of the curriculum. This is an impossible task without first getting to know the students. How can you teach someone who you do not know? Their interests and what they desire from the course goes a long way in effective teaching.

I engage with students through illustrative examples and stories, modern technology, and classroom activities designed to help clarify concepts that otherwise may be confusing or unclear. It is especially important in our current climate of technological advancement to integrate new ways of conveying material clearly to my students. YouTube is an amazing resource for clearly illustrating key concepts from lectures and reinforce my teaching to each student. One example of this is demonstrated by a chemical communication lecture I gave a few years ago. I played an amazing clip of the Bolas spider to my class to demonstrate the way the spider attracts moths using a moth pheromone (an allomone in this case) to attract the moths close enough to capture with its bolas (a sticky lasso-type prey capturing device). This method was very successful, proven to me through numerous interactions after the class period referring to the video and the concept of chemical communication. In addition, I strive to use an "assertion evidence" structure to my PowerPoint lectures. The use of PowerPoint often conveys course material in a linear and confusing manner. An assertion evidence approach uses a structure that clearly writes the assertion at the top of the slide, followed by visual evidence that supports the assertion and makes the slide memorable.

It is my priority as a teacher to make my course clear and beneficial for each student who walks through my doors. One way I can improve throughout any given course is by collecting formative feedback through methods such as "minute papers" and "muddiest point". Minute papers are given out at the end of class and simply consist of students briefly writing on topics reflecting on the course, such as "what did you find most interesting from today's class" or "What questions do you have that were left unanswered from the class". This allows me to get a better feel for how the students are grasping the information. Muddiest

point follows the same general format, but asks students to write down what was most confusing or unclear from the lecture. This allows me the opportunity to clarify course material that may be confusing to multiple students in the class and reform my own strategies for effectively teaching a given concept. Both forms of feedback help me as the instructor to be effective in my course. These formats also allow me to respond to questions, concerns, and other interesting comments from my students and convey my investment to making the class a genuine and exciting arena for learning.

By bringing enthusiasm to the classroom, creating an environment conducive to intellectual growth, and engaging each student with multiple teaching tools and approaches, I hope to inspire students to develop a love and appreciation of science.