

Statement of Education Philosophy

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I love to teach and I love to learn. These facts alone would be enough to propel my daily involvement in teaching and learning with medical and other health professional students, residents and faculty members. But there is another force driving my passion for teaching and that is my belief that education is the most important of the three traditional roles of a modern university. Research is essential, but it is only through excellent education that the new knowledge created in university research can find application in the world. Service is indispensable, but it is only through excellent education that university graduates can provide the best service to their communities.

Thus, I believe that teaching and educational scholarship must be front and centre in the life of every university teacher and student. However, my students, my faculty colleagues and administrators do not always orient university priorities in this way. Thus, I consider it my challenge to do everything I can to raise the profile of teaching and educational scholarship in my university and beyond. I have tried to do this in two ways. First, I have built relationships. Learning occurs best in an environment that is safe and supportive while at the same time being stimulating and challenging. I try to create this environment in all my teaching, regardless of whether I am working with a first year medical student or a medical school dean. I look to the anonymous comments that students submit each year to see how well I am doing. It is heartening to me to see that over the years, students have associated their successes with the quality of the learning environment and the relationships they have developed with me and with each other. They have provided me important feedback with their comments, their ratings and the awards that are described herein.

Second, I have scrutinized as many teaching and assessment methods as I can through the lens of educational research. Inspired by the movement of evidence-based education, I have set out to show that our educational methods are reliable and valid. And where I found they were not, I have endeavored to create new ones. I have tried to share my ideas through extensive workshops, lectures and publications, reaching out to colleagues in other cities and other countries whenever possible. The opportunity to be a visiting educational scholar in Israel, in Hawaii, in Switzerland and in New Zealand has greatly enriched my understanding of challenges in teaching and learning and strengthened my own teaching and research.

But sometimes it is much simpler than all that. When I arrived in class today my small group of first year neuroscience students was tired and dispirited after a long examination. They wanted to go home. At the end of two hours they were excitedly, discussing a complex neurological case and seemed reluctant to leave. I knew when I arrived today that my most important job was to work with these tired and overwhelmed medical students, to coax them back toward a renewed enthusiasm for learning about being a good doctor.