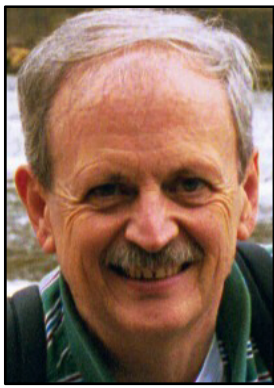


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Teaching: What Do the Best College Teachers Do?



In September USU was fortunate to host Dr. Ken Bain, author of *What the Best College Teachers Do*. One of his points was that the act of teaching is usually quite private. Bottom line, we can talk with each other about strategies, but when we teach we are usually alone with our students. Many of us wonder what goes on in the classrooms of the best teachers, and Ken includes this discussion in his book. Below I share, with Ken's permission, an excerpt from the chapter "How do they conduct class?"

"So what distinguishes the successful from the unsuccessful? More than anything else, the best teachers try to create a natural critical learning environment: "natural" because students encounter the skills, habits, attitudes, and information they are trying to learn embedded in questions and tasks they find fascinating—authentic tasks that arouse curiosity and become intrinsically interesting. Some teachers create this environment within lectures; others, with discussions; and still others, with case studies, role playing, field work, or a variety of other techniques." Five essential elements make up the natural critical learning environment.

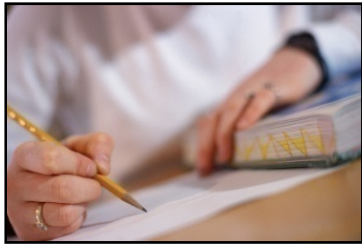
1. Articulating an intriguing question or problem
2. Helping students understand the significance of the question
3. Engaging students in higher-order intellectual activity around the question; encouraging students to compare, apply, evaluate, analyze, and synthesize, but never only to listen and remember
4. Developing and defending an answer to the question
5. Recognizing and voicing the questions that remain

Bain, K. (2004) *What the Best College Teachers Do*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, pp 98-103.

To listen to Dr. Bain's USU speech in its entirety, copy the following URL into your internet browser:
<mms://stream.usu.edu/misc/provost/DrBain.wmv>

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Establishing a Scholarly Program: What Do the Most Productive Scholars Do?



Research/scholarship is a significant part of one's academic career, and this usually includes a considerable amount of writing. For some faculty, new and seasoned alike, scholarly writing may be the part that elicits the most anxiety. In a study of the written productivity of new faculty members Robert Boice (*Advice for New Faculty Members*, 2000, Allyn & Bacon) found that new faculty members who struggled to produce scholarly writing:

1. "were imprinted with mistaken ideas about the nature of writing...Dominant among those is the misbelief that writing is best done in large blocks of uninterrupted time, when writers are at last motivated and inspired, when production can be spontaneous and brilliant. The problem is that writers who wait for such ideal circumstances usually wait a long time. A second popular fallacy is that good writing needs no outlines or other careful preplanning, that it happens best in a single and spontaneous sitting." (p. 105)
2. "almost always say (they are) too busy to write." (p. 105)
3. "often reject simple, efficient ways of writing as counterintuitive, even as insulting. That is, they prefer to do what they imagine geniuses do as writers...do their best work without constraints such as rules. In fact though, the simple efficiencies of constancy and moderation produce far more creativity and better writing than rule-free spontaneity."

Boice found that "exemplary new faculty...model better ways of working at writing: they get writing underway by learning to work in brief, daily sessions that seem impossibly brief at first. They learn ways to simplify and clarify writing, even to enjoy it. And their constancy and moderation produce more manuscript pages with more likelihood of publication in refereed and prestigious outlets than faculty who do not develop these practices." (p. 105)

In addition to attention to writing, Carole J. Bland, Ann Marie Weber-Main, Sharon Marie Lund, and Deborah A. Finstad (*The Research Productive Department*, 2005, Anker Publishing Co.) found that the most productive scholars, among other things:

1. Have strong internal motivation and are "driven to explore, understand, and follow his or her own ideas and believes he or she has a responsibility to advance and contribute to society through innovation, discovery, and creative works". (p. 17)
2. Establish "productive scholarly habits early in their career". (p. 19)

Finally, several prominent researchers on our campus offer this advice for developing and nurturing a scholarly program:

Ray Reutzel, Emma Eccles Jones Endowed Chair and Director; Distinguished Professor of Early Childhood Education; Recipient of the 2007 D. Wynne Thorne Research Award:

"Scholarship and research are the coin of the realm in higher education. Be committed to scholarly/research work above all else in planning your time. Schedule a writing time every day in a quiet place where you will not be disturbed. Get into the habit of writing! Be careful to whom you say 'yes' when asked to serve on internal or external committees in the early stages of your career. "

Noel Cockett, Professor of Animal, Dairy, and Veterinary Sciences; Dean of College of Agriculture; Vice-President for University Extension; Fellow, American Association for the Advancement of

Science; Recipient of the 2002 D. Wynne Thorne Research Award; U.S. Coordinator for Sheep Genome Mapping:

“Make yourself known around campus as someone who is starting up a research program with needs for students, technical help, and research collaborations. Attend seminars and other functions where researchers with similar interests might gather. Reflect on who might be on-campus collaborators and make an appointment to see him/her as soon as possible. If a connection is established, ask specific questions of grant opportunities (both internal and external), facilities (both internal and external), sources of undergraduate students, graduate students and technical help, and tips for success at USU. The key is to establish a network with other USU researchers with similar interests who become interested in your success.”

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Larry's Corner: What Are the Most Common Questions Faculty Have About T & P?



As the Vice Provost who coordinates the university's tenure and promotion procedures at the level of the Central Tenure and Promotion Committee, I am often consulted on aspects of the tenure and promotion process. Below are two questions that are among those I am asked most frequently.

I am an assistant professor and need to have a meeting of my tenure advisory committee as part of my required annual review. However, one member of my tenure advisory committee is on sabbatical this year. Can I use a substitute for that member of my committee for that meeting only?

The answer is...no. According to the USU policy manual section 400, otherwise referred to as the faculty code, specifically section 405.7.1 (1), “All tenure advisory committee members shall participate interactively in all committee meetings, either physically or by voice conferencing, at the appointed date and time.” So, currently there is no provision for substitute tenure advisory committee members and it is clear that all members must participate in some interactive fashion. To my knowledge, tenure advisory committee members who have been unable to be on campus have been very accommodating in making arrangements to participate in tenure and promotion meetings through some interactive means. If it is the rare case that a member of a tenure advisory committee absolutely cannot attend a candidate's advisory meeting, and this is usually known well ahead of time, then a viable option would be to replace that member as allowed in the faculty code in 405.6.2 (1), “The candidate may request replacement of committee members subject to the approval of the department head or supervisor, the director (where applicable), and the dean, or vice president.” The faculty code makes it clear that it is the department head that has the authority for approving and even making changes to a tenure advisory committee meeting. Also from 405.6.2 (1), “The appointing authority [department head] for each committee shall fill vacancies on the committee as they occur. In consultation with the faculty member and the director (where applicable), dean, or vice president, the department head or supervisor may replace members of the tenure advisory committee.”

What are the rules for an extension of the pre-probationary period for tenure and promotion because of, for example, the birth of a child?

The faculty code provides a means for extending your “tenure clock” for a variety of personal reasons such as a medical condition, or family responsibilities. The faculty code language for this can be found in

section 405.1.4 (4) "...at any time during the tenure process a tenure eligible faculty member can request an extension of the pre-tenure probationary period for one year for reasons including, but not limited to, medical needs of the faculty member or a family member or family responsibilities (including birth of a child or adoption). This extension may be requested up to two times, so long as the total pre-tenure probationary period does not exceed nine years. Upon recommendation from the faculty member's department head or supervisor, director (where applicable), and the dean or vice president, the Provost may approve an extension of the faculty member's pre-tenure probationary period. During the year in which the pre-tenure probationary period extension is granted, faculty responsibilities may be negotiated. When the faculty member that has extended the pre-tenure probationary period goes forward for tenure, research expectations will be no greater than if the tenure extension had not been utilized." Key points in this section of code are that the extensions to the "tenure clock" cannot bring the total pre-tenure probationary time to greater than nine years and that expectations of the faculty member in the area of research at the time of tenure and promotion review cannot be inflated because the candidate received an extension.

For further clarification of these issues or if you have other questions, Vice Provost Smith can be reached at 797-0718 or at larry.smith@usu.edu.

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Gary's Code Quiz: How Well Do You Know Faculty Code?

Gary Straquadine, Professor and Associate Dean in the College of Agriculture is famous for developing "Code Quizzes" to help faculty understand the legal document that governs them. Below are several of Gary's code quiz questions.

- T or F** 1. The role statement must be reviewed by the promotion and tenure advisory committee, approved, and re-signed by the committee each year.
- T or F** 2. The term "role assignment" is synonymous or interchangeable with the term "role statement".
- T or F** 3. The third year review is conducted in the beginning of the fourth year once a candidate has completed three years of appointment in the tenure track position.
- T or F** 4. Serving as the chair of a graduate committee is considered teaching (mentoring) and not research.
- T or F** 5. The external reviews for promotion and tenure are conducted by respected academicians agreed to by both the advisory committee and department head.
- T or F** 6. The ombudsperson assigned to an annual tenure advisory committee meeting must receive the candidate's packet one week in advance to review and offer an opinion about the renewal status of the candidate.
- T or F** 7. The letter from the tenure advisory committee reporting on the annual promotion and tenure meeting of candidates in the pre-tenure probationary period must include a recommendation for renewal or non-renewal of the candidate.



[Click here to link to the answers at the end of this document.](#)

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Faculty Spotlight: Lyle McNeal - Utah's Professor of the Year



The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching has recognized Dr. Lyle McNeal, Professor ADVS, as Utah's Professor of the Year. Lyle, or "Doc" as he is known by his students, was honored at a reception on November 29 at the Alumni House.

In case you don't know "Sheepman" a brief introduction is in order. Doc-sightings most reliably occur at 6:45 am any morning of the week and on many Saturdays. Look for a rancher in cowboy boots, jeans, and a white Stetson striding across campus into the Animal, Dairy, and Veterinary Science (ADVS) Building.

Doc is well-known even outside scientific circles for his development of the American Polypay Sheep breed.

He has given extensive service to the Dine' or Navajo People and is known as "White Father" for his work to save the Navajo Churro sheep from extinction. This work has been highlighted in 1998 and 2005 editions of *National Geographic*. Concerned about the sustainability of their lifestyle, he helped the Navajos develop lamb and wool cooperatives as a way of circumventing sheep buyers who were often taking advantage of the Dine'.

Lyle's commitment to his students is legendary. They speak repeatedly of his challenging classes, and his intuitive understanding of how people learn. With infectious enthusiasm, he encourages his students to become involved in a variety of practical experiences. They take turns helping in the USU sheep barns during lambing season and visit ranches throughout the West, observing and helping with animal management tasks such as shearing of sheep, vaccinations, health examinations, worming, etc.

His former students now manage ranching and breeding operations in Wyoming, Utah, Montana, Oregon, Idaho, California, and Washington and are major producers of wool, sheep, swine, and beef cattle. A large number of former students work with 4-H youth as part of their cooperative extension assignments in Utah, Idaho, Nevada, Wyoming, and Montana. Others work with the BLM, managing the Wild Horse and Burro Program and water projects for sustainable agriculture for the Ute Indian Reservation. Many of his students teach in high school vocational agriculture programs, and there is hardly a high school agriculture program in Utah that does not have one of Doc's students on staff. Finally, some of his students are research scientists with USDA or have followed Doc's path to become a professor in higher education.

When asked for a pithy piece of teaching advice, Lyle offered the following:

"Be enthusiastic! Enthusiasm is one of the scarcest resources in today's academic environment because of the non-academic demands placed on young faculty members.

Respect from students is crucial for faculty enthusiasm, but faculty members must also respect students in return. A teacher's rude or disrespectful behavior will erode any enthusiasm students would have for the course and for their major.

A positive classroom attitude will establish a high altitude for everything that goes on in that environment. The instructor must lead the class with enthusiasm. This is an effective tool against the enemy called negativism. With enthusiasm comes many small, but important rewards for both teachers and students.”

Congratulations Lyle! You make us proud.

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Answers to Promotion and Tenure Policy Quiz

1. FALSE – see 405.6.1
2. FALSE – see 405.6.1
3. FALSE – see 405.1.4 (table 405.1.4)
4. TRUE – see 405.2.2 (1)
5. TRUE – see 405.7.2 (1)
6. FALSE – see 405.6.5
7. TRUE – see 405.6.2 (1)

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