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FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES

I bring an open mind, a positive attitude, and high expectations into the classroom. I do this with the goal of inspiring and encouraging such traits in my students. My classroom is one in which students are treated as professionals, highly respected, and encouraged to take ownership of their learning. As an educator and mentor I aim to challenge and inspire students to think about their world and the future of business administration creatively, with an inquisitive approach, and through active learning. I believe that knowledge gained through active participation is knowledge that will stay with an individual, thus my approach to teaching reflects that philosophy. Comprehension and retention of materials is vital but understanding that critical thinking, problem solving, communication, and team work applied within our field is also essential to future success. I have a greater responsibility than to just teach traditional materials found in a textbook. I have the responsibility of challenging students to go beyond what's expected or traditional in an effort to encourage free-thinking and new approaches to problem solving and business management.

My goal is to foster learning through creating an inclusive classroom environment as well as encouraging individual thought and team collaboration which are in kind essential to a successful business setting. I strive to personally model this behavior using my professional experience, often incorporating current projects as they are presented to me and continuously seeking new methods of processing and presenting data. My lesson plan allows flexibility for this spontaneous discovery as well as directives towards specific goals. I present students the fundamentals of subjects, current real-world examples, and a collaborative forum for discussing options to deal with these issues and why. From this, students will experience a hands-on practical application of the learning process.

INCLUSIVITY AND COMMUNICATION

A classroom, like a business, is a living community and everyone in it has value. All students are expected to contribute and I learn from them as much as they learn from me. Ensuring the classroom is an open, inclusive, and respectful environment where students feel safe and comfortable to speak freely and at times question or challenge the status quo is essential to learning and growth. I'm open with my time, keep regular office hours, and respond to emails in a timely fashion to encourage dialog. I provide strong structure and a transparent feedback system in my teaching. In order to provide structure, I engage in several practices. Prior to class I write the agenda for the day on the board and refer to it throughout class. I also intentionally design and organize my Blackboard page so that it's transparent, thorough, and up-to-date. Additionally, I send reminders about upcoming due dates and assignments to students. Meaningful and timely feedback is vital to the structure of my classes. I note in my syllabus that I'm committed to grading assignments and providing feedback within 48 hours of the due date. In order to track assignments and communication I require students submit assignments, questions, and concerns via Blackboard. This provides an electronic dialog where I can offer personalized and individual feedback.

ENGAGED LEARNING STRUCTURE

Active Learning: I've found group work, which facilitates peer-teaching, to be very effective at engaging students and promoting active learning in business, marketing, and entrepreneurial classes. Example: In my "identify-ask-share" activities students engage in small group work identifying a current real-world concern presently facing a company followed by asking and answering our "core questions" and then ending the exercise by sharing their thought-process and discoveries to the class using the board as a visual communication tool.

Inquiry Learning: Using straightforward problems with well-defined methods and solutions are important to reinforce a student's understanding, it is equally important to provide students with opportunities to develop and test their own methods for problem solving. This inquiry-based approach gives students a better sense of how the business world really works and that problem solving is organic and ever-changing. Example: Depending on the class being taught the focus of a project may be finance related but I've found that students have enjoyed discovering new approaches to implementing wellness into their lives and how it could be applicable in any office setting. After watching a series of short TED talks, teams are formed and groups are tasked with identifying steps needed to implement a wellness plan into a business as well as roadblocks that should be considered prior to launch.

Writing: Writing in a clear and concise manner is what students are expected to do. Over time I've found that many students develop a habit of writing to fill a quota oftentimes losing focus of an issue. Typically a top administrator doesn't have time to read a lengthy document but would rather just be presented with the facts of the matter. Sometimes less writing can offer more clear insight. Example: One exercise we repeat throughout the semester consists of writing a synopsis of an article of their choosing, based on whatever we're learning about at that time. At the following class each student spends time editing and condensing their assignment to no more than one paragraph without losing the focus of their writing. The editing is a timed event. When the timer expires we discuss and reflect on the challenges faced and keys to successful future "direct" writing.

Informal and Formal Assessments: In order to further refine my teaching skills and methods, assessments are vital. Group activities provide real-time feedback allowing for a dynamic and constantly improving classroom environment. While students work in groups, I walk around the room, check-in with each student or group, ask questions, offer feedback, and encourage their progress. These real-time assessments allow me to gauge the pace and efficacy of my lessons, help specific individuals or groups, and adjust the lesson where needed, all of which improves my lessons and keeps students more engaged in the future. Of additional great importance are homework problems, quizzes, exams, and presentations, all of which allow me to gauge both how well a student can independently investigate problems, communicate their knowledge, and how effective my lessons are at teaching necessary information inside the classroom.