

Teaching Reflection and Growth Plan 2018

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Overview

Over the course of obtaining my Certificate of Innovation in College Teaching (CICT), I had four different types of external assessment of my teaching. While teaching the Principles of Biology laboratory class, I had a senior TA observe my class of 24 students and provide feedback, I had a representative of the CICT program perform a mid-term review of the course content and structure, I had a videoed teaching consultation of a short lecture I gave to the lecture class (400 students), and received student assessment and comments on my teaching. While teaching Histology lab to 10 senior-level students, I did an additional videoed teaching consultation.

Principles of Biology reflection

In Principles of Biology I am one of 13 TAs that teach a total of 25 lab sections for almost 600 students. We are constrained by the fact that we need to be “fair and equal” across all sections, so that students feel that the experience in each lab section is equivalent. We are also not instructors of record, meaning that we are given the syllabus and content for the lab activities and do not have the freedom to incorporate new or revise old content independently. That being said, we do have some freedom in our classrooms to utilize active learning techniques to facilitate student learning and retention. Following my 4 types of assessment during Fall 2017 (course observation, mid-term review, student assessment, and videoed teaching consultation), my broad goal for teacher improvement is to incorporate additional active learning techniques such as minute papers, group quizzing, small group discussion, and think-pair-share activities into my teaching portfolio.

My major achievement in this class was as Lead TA. I incorporated peer-assessment of teaching into the responsibilities of every TA. Throughout the term every one of us 13 TAs were observed by a fellow TA and asked to reflect on our teaching. I believe that peer- and self-assessment are key tools in improving our teaching and communication skills. Not only are we learning through self-reflection, we are observing others teach and learning from them. We can identify novel ideas and practices that other use and incorporate those new tools into our own teaching toolbox.

Histology reflection

Teaching Histology is truly a delight. My students are senior-level students who are excited to learn and care about the content of the course. We see each other twice a week for 3 hours each day. This provides ample time to build a lot of student-instructor trust. Similar to Principles of Biology, I am given little freedom as to the content of the course, but I do have some freedom in how I choose to deliver the content. There are set powerpoints that I use to introduce content, but I am free to experiment and find my own best-practices on how to clearly identify and disambiguate complicated histological features. I have found that allowing students to lead their learning by choosing what topics we should delve into at a deeper level has been an excellent strategy in this course. For example, if we are covering a complex organ like skin, I

have students identify the areas that are most confusing to them and then work to provide as many independent examples for them as possible. Although the students are provided with a wealth of reference resources, it takes a fair amount of guidance to navigate those resources.

Because Histology is a small class--I only have 10 students--I have ample time to provide one-on-one attention to each student. I make it a priority to go around to each student every day and check in on their progress. I take that opportunity to ask about specific issues or trouble spots and then work with the students to resolve them. I also have students take quizzes weekly to assess content mastery and immediately provide feedback. I do this by going over each question and explaining my answers. Students often have questions during this process and we stop and address those questions before moving on.

Growth plan

I am graduating this term with my PhD and do not have plans to teach in the near future. I do, however, plan to continue growing as an instructor and communicator. To do this I plan to do the following:

- Assess and refine my teaching portfolio yearly
- Complete at least two communication or education trainings/continuing education courses per year
- Ask for peer-evaluation on all presentations/lectures
 - During development stage
 - Following final presentation
- Self-reflect on all presentations/lectures and writing tasks
 - During development stage
 - Following final presentation
- Continue to improve my website as a method of science communication
- Reach out to area universities and community colleges in search of opportunities to present on my research or area of expertise to students and faculty
- Mentor peers and junior technicians on communication and instructional best-practices