

My teaching philosophy is built around my personal three core values: Community, Understanding, and Awareness. I believe if I am able to infuse my three personal core values into my teaching, I will provide students with an enriching learning environment and prepare them for successful future professional endeavors.

My first core value is Community. I feel the classroom should be a community all members want to enter. Technical information is critical to completing an engineering task, but equally important are students' ethical and leadership development. In terms of ethical development, by acting as a community, students develop the ability to think holistically, work productively, and cultivate a sense of responsibility for their own behavior. In terms of leadership development, ownership and a strong identity in the classroom fosters community building skills. Through practicing these technical, ethical, and leadership attributes within the supportive teaching arena, students build confidence and prepare themselves for the demands of the professional community. Without Community, I believe a learning institution does not have the strength or the structure to support all the essential goals of higher education. I introduce and promote the characteristics of Community in my teaching by emphasizing report writing and presentations for classes. For example, group report writing and presentations are the primary assignments for my undergraduate technical elective CVEG 4863 "Sustainability in Civil Engineering" at the University of Arkansas. By working in groups on these projects, students gain ownership of their portion of the project, build identity for recognizing the tasks at which they excel, and form a community where all participants know their strengths. Fostering Community in the classroom allows students to function on multi-disciplinary teams and strengthen their ethical and leadership skills, all essential skills in any job environment.

The second core value I wish to bring to the classroom is Understanding. Each member of the community should actively understand himself or herself and the other members of the group. The students, as well as the instructor, should be informed, sympathetic and compassionate to those around them. By cultivating Understanding, students develop cohesion with one another, widen the door of their knowledge, and enhance their personal development. They will learn to understand personal and professional perspectives and values, plus develop an openness to new ideas. By understanding themselves and those around them, the students develop a greater awareness as well as a stronger commitment and respect for their own values. A core portion of my Understanding was obtained by participating in a two-year Post-Doc at Southeast University in Nanjing, China, and a six-month sabbatical at Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya in Barcelona, Spain. Over the combined two and a half years, these intercultural experiences allowed me to look at problems from unique perspectives and leverage new tools to handle unexpected and unfamiliar challenges as they arose. It is my goal to weave these perspectives and tools into the classroom to provide students with examples of Understanding to begin their own professional journey.

Neither Community nor Understanding, however, can be achieved without Awareness, my third core value. I have observed and firmly believe from personal experience that, if

we remain alert in observing and interpreting what we see and hear, information flows smoothly. By practicing cognizance and sensibility, learning comes naturally. Through Awareness, people also build higher-order thinking skills. Through practicing Awareness in the classroom, students learn how to apply principles they already know to new problems and situations, improve their listening skills, and strengthen their self-esteem and self-confidence. My cognizance of Awareness grew extensively from my participation in ExCEED: Excellence in Civil Engineering Education. Before participating in ExCEED, I had been a teaching assistant for multiple courses, a graduate assistant at the Illinois Leadership Center, taken a graduate level course in teaching (EOL 585 "Classroom Teaching"), and had taught multiple undergraduate and graduate courses at the University of Arkansas. However, ExCEED exposed me to "learning how to teach" through eight steps in a model instructional strategy:

1. Provide an orientation
2. Provide learning objectives
3. Provide information
4. Stimulate critical thinking about the subject
5. Provide models
6. Provide opportunities to apply the knowledge
7. Assess the learners' performance and provide feedback
8. Provide opportunities for self-assessment.

By formally structuring my teaching around these eight steps, I believe I have been able to improve student learning in the classroom. These eight steps do not compose a linear process and are dependent on my instructional design and the students in the classroom. However, from being a teaching assistant to teaching my own courses, my journey through Awareness continues every day and I strive to continually increase the students' Awareness as well.

In summary, I believe a classroom is an incredible arena for personal, interpersonal, and professional growth, and this growth can be achieved to a large extent through Community, Understanding, and Awareness in the classroom. I aspire to convey and will continue to seek knowledge through these three personal core values. My ability to promote Community, Understanding, and Awareness in the classroom has been demonstrated multiple times at the University of Arkansas, including receiving a 2012 New Teaching Commendation award, a 2012, 2014, and 2018 Outstanding Mentor award, and the 2016 and 2018 Civil Engineering department Outstanding Teacher award.