Teaching and Learning Philosophy at Northwest Indian College
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An Understanding of Place, People and Time provides Institutional Guidance

philosophy {Gk. φιλοσοφια [philosophia]}

Literally, love of wisdom. Hence, careful thought about the fundamental nature of the world, the grounds for human knowledge, and the evaluation of human conduct. As an academic discipline, philosophy's chief branches include logic, metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics, and the appropriate aims and methods of each are the concern of metaphilosophy.

Most teachers have a personnel philosophy about teaching and learning that is their guide on how to articulate goals and how to achieve them. For action oriented individuals a request to write them down causes anxiety about where to begin.

The act of taking time to consider one's goals, actions, and vision provides an opportunity for development that can be personally and professionally enriching causing one to reflect on their growth and dedication to goals and values that they hold. This statement provides a philosophy of life and commitment to goals.

In my case the commitment to student learning follows a definite need to provide opportunities to actively engage themselves in the maintenance and use of the environment in ways that benefit everyone. Student learning occurs by allowing the student to reach out and acquire knowledge through exploration of books and hands on experiences. Especially important is the interaction of students to students, collecting experience from their experience.

The role of the Teacher: As a model to help the student learn the teacher must motivate the student, providing help to students who are frustrated, accommodating their different abilities. Office hours are anytime a student needs help.

Goals for students. Help students to value and nurture their intellectual curiosity, live ethical lives that they may have productive careers. Lifelong goals such as teamwork and integrity can be detailed through their learning.

Providing a personnel model: My life has been enriching to me. Assistance and guidance provided by my parents, childhood friends, the schools attended and the work experiences provided by my education preparation, all guide my philosophy to insure others will have similar experiences. Sharing the knowledge gained for specific goals such as insuring Native Americans can share equally the resources granted by their Treaties is especially important. Dialogue with colleagues, comparison of practices with goals, and examination of student or peer feedback on teaching helps with the task of enumerating present questions, puzzles, and challenges.

- -Having high expectations for academic success and allowing students to feel competent
- -Expressing care and concern towards students by viewing them as individuals encourages respect.
- As a teacher we are responsible for preparing students for active and productive participation in the public sphere.
- Articulate a vision of the institution, community and world toward which they are working
- I see my role as the facilitator of a <u>learning community</u> of which I am but one member. I have something to teach you just as you **have something to teach me.**
- **We can all learn from each other but I also come eager to hear yours.**
- **I fully expect each class discussion to be guided by the intellectual concerns of us all—not just my own**

It distresses me to find too many students of all ages and settings focusing on grades rather than on their learning. I understand the culture that helped create this problem, but it is time for a new teaching and learning paradigm and it is happening all around us at this very moment...

We have been trained to sit glued in our chairs taking notes as fast as we could and generating our best guesses at what needed to be memorized for regurgitation on exams and/or papers (in meetings). We are guided by the 'Sage on the Stage' toward goals that have meaning to them but not to the recipient. Participation in development of true goals and needs is often one sided due to the lack of truly listening to both sides.

The new teaching and learning paradigm adopts a 'Guide on the Side' attitude for the faculty role. Understanding that true learning takes effort and participation and involvement on the part of the learner, the new pedagogy involves creating a structured learning environment for the student to navigate with assistance. The faculty role of providing the structure, the resources, and the environment for learning is crucial to the process and is the most appropriate role for a new learning paradigm. Students may find that they grow frustrated with their 'Guide on the Side' and desperately want the 'Sage on the Stage' to just tell them what they need to know. In other words contributions from all participants is required.

Most of us were raised in competitive learning environments where we tried to 'out-do' our classmates. The majority of today's work environments are too complex for isolated employees to accomplish their tasks and be productive working from a competitive attitude. Today, employers succeed when they generate environments for cooperative teamwork inside the organization, and view their competition as the external marketplace not the internal competitive attitudes. Internal organizational competition is counterproductive for employees as well as the employer. There is an increasing need for teamwork and cooperation in the workplace as well as the classroom. Our teaching and learning paradigms MUST promote teamwork and cooperative learning environments.

- **Giving and sharing of resources, skills, knowledge.**

- **Creative thinking. Critical thinking. Form educated opinions, then defend them.**

In cooperative learning the theory is that everyone wins--no one looses. The learning process is not seen as an individual pursuit concerned with accumulating knowledge, but as part of a social process where students helps each other to develop understanding in an enjoyable and stimulating context. The learning is **process** driven and learners must be involved in the social process and pay attention to this process to achieve their desired goals. The outcomes are not only academic, but involve increased competence in working with others, self understanding and self confidence. The learning activities may end up in group products, which would not be achievable if learners worked individually, or the process may consist of learners helping and supporting each other in achieving individual learning goals.

Translating Teachers Learning and Teaching Philosophy to Institutional Philosophy

Institutions are guided by Strategic Plans and Mission statements that are formed to meet the needs of the students and communities that they serve. Interaction with the community, changing times and resources will make the Strategic Plan a living document, subject to change to meet demands as they occur. Faculty, curriculums formed and continued interaction with the community will insure the institution is able to provide services that are meaningful as they meet the defined needs

- . Success will incorporate models that realize the institution is in the people business—not necessarily in the teaching business. This will lead to a deep loyalty and long term-sustained success.
- Dedicated people managing the institution will attract people who "fit".
- Providing a platform, tools, training where people are dedicated to making a difference because they believe in and trust the institution.

Teaching and learning begins by hiring people who believe in what they are doing. A positive attitude projects itself into the students and faculty making them proud of their contributions to the institution. Making the faculty want to work for the goals fostered by the institution embracing fun, individuality, and trust in the employees who in turn work hard to serve the institution.

Having a faculty that is encouraged to explore their interests and talents will energize the people who are major contributors to the success of the institution. Encourage people to tell their stories and provide input to the development of programs. People who think outside the box, are not afraid to be themselves, are honest and ethical, have a high level of integrity, are good team players, and take their job seriously, but can laugh at themselves are generally successful because they can communicate.