

LEARNING TOGETHER ONLINE



Using Instructional Design and the Design & Development Process in Online Teaching and Learning

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How I Got to Teach Online

How Would You Teach This Course?

I firmly believe that to become a good faculty member in a college or university that you need, first of all, to have been a good student at a college or university. When I was a graduate student I was always thinking about how I would teach a course. In my notebook, I would record notes from the lecture on the right side, but on the left side I made notes on what the instructor did and the time spent on each activity. In this way, I was documenting the teaching of the professor, although I didn't think about that at the time. I knew that in the distant future I might have an opportunity to teach a college course. So I asked myself, "How would I teach this course?"

Big picture. If you're thinking of working at a research institution, a place where research is valued and expected, then learning the art and science of one's trade requires that one experience while a graduate student the very habits and practices of one's future profession. This is the idea behind my most scholarly paper, *A Program of Human Inquiry*, published in the *Journal of Innovative Higher Education*. What I'm saying here is that you need to learn how to be an assistant professor while a graduate student. This means learning how to teach at the college level, conducting research and publishing your findings, as well as experiencing some of the service activities, such as committee work. So I set a "high bar," but you deserve to at least observe in a faculty member what being a faculty member is like. Even if your goals do not involve the expectations of a research university, you are preparing yourself to earn "the union card" to be able to practice at such an institution. And, even if you are unsure, let me stress that thinking about ways of teaching and studying that teaching give you experience at both teaching and research in your professional future. This is how I did that and how this process contributed to how I teach today.

1992-1999 Graduate Education

We don't mean to say that the work that you are doing is not real work, as most of us have varying percentages allocated to teaching, research, and service responsibilities. Now that tenure has been earned, it's time to re-assess and re-commit to one's next stage, whatever that means for you. Your next stage could be full professor or the next ten years. Each of us views the next stage in different ways.

What does the real work mean to you?

Unless you have asked yourself this question, you may need some prompting of some kind. Try any or all of the following questions:

What are your current percentages for teaching, research, and service? Do you want to change the percentages to focus more on one aspect? What needs to occur to make this case to your department chair/head?

Are you interested in more administrative responsibilities? Don't laugh. Some people like the challenge of building or running programs. Perhaps the question might take the form of: "Do you see yourself being tapped for some leadership responsibilities?" Your interest may be more pragmatic in that you know you may be asked to "step up" and run a program or department.

What is the reality of real work in academia?

Student numbers

Grant dollars

Online teaching

New forms of academic programs

TOOL: Choosing and living your metaphor(s)

In one of my college courses, Visual Literacy, I ask students to identify a visual that matches their personal philosophy. This task ranges from easy to difficult, depending on how introspective you are or have been prompted to think about your personal philosophy in some course or professional development activity. My personal metaphors are several; one of which is Advocate (new teachers), Tour Guide (teaching strategy), Bison (Western USA frame of mind), or Ram (aggressive, purposeful, loyal). The purpose of identifying a personal metaphor, if you haven't already done so, is to use the iconic image as a test against how you've been working in the past. Have you been working at odds to who you are and what you are about?

For me the use of Advocate and Tour Guide have been instrumental in my college teaching and advising. To be an advocate of your students means first knowing who they are and what's important to them, and then relating your course to what's relevant to them at the moment. Such an approach might be rejected by some professors who see their jobs as conveying a mastery of knowledge and skills, and it doesn't matter who or what you are. You either get it or you don't. This brute force approach still predominates but more and more young people are shrugging off the promise of a college educator as some doorway to

a happy life. They're not buying into the traditional logic of degree = meaningful life or that postsecondary programs can really prepare them for the world they see.

The Tour Guide metaphor shapes my teaching decisions in terms of structuring activity to directly have students experience the "content," whatever that might be. My job is to design these activities and guide them across some terrain, have an adventure where the outcome is unknown. In my case, teaching courses in instructional design, instructional technology, cognition, and visual literacy mastery is difficult to achieve in a "first pass" and that having a grasp of information only is insufficient in the long run. My challenge is realizing that some students may not "get it" in 15 weeks or they have difficulty applying principles and processes where there are no right or wrong answers.

Part I Productive Work = Meaningful Work

What a productive work plan requires

Obtaining promotion and tenure required that decide a plan, write it down, and revisit it often. We admit that the metaphor of the “gun” of tenure is not the best image, at least it’s off from your head. The thought of writing up a post-tenure plan doesn’t enter the picture right away. You’re tired and you may not even care at this stage. But the success to getting to the real work and having a life requires a plan.

However, the most important part of a plan really comes after you’ve decided on an initial plan and have written it down. The value of deciding on a plan is that you have a starting point, but it’s only a tentative road map. As in real life, working the plan means continually looking at the plan for validity, of which there are at least two types. Content validity would involve the specific products that demonstrate your productivity, the ones that “count” in your particular setting. However, another type of validity for working a plan would be a validity of appropriateness. Does the plan really represent what you want to do? What you need to do and what you want to do may be too different matters. Revisiting a plan means scrutinizing not only the specific features but the overall direction you’ve chosen to take.

Even if the plan is sound the road map you envisioned may be changing, partly to changes going on around you. New developments in your institution, such as a new dean or grant activity, can require you to re-think your plan. Changes around you involving your family or extended family can impact your ability to focus on your plan. Sometimes the changes in the road map are based on things just taking longer than you imagined or had hoped for. We’ve come to discover that everything takes at least three times as long as we had planned. New writing projects, if they involve collaborators, can take on uncertain schedules.

Getting to the real work and having a life can’t be accomplished with short cuts, but a written plan can be the beginning of a plan to get you there:

Your Plan for Real Work-Life = Decide, Record, Revisit

Professional and personal focus for a plan

The focus of the post-tenure plan can be three-fold: promotion to full professor, the next ten years, and real life. The full-professor plan can take another 5-6 years, at the very minimum, and the exact length may depend on the policies of your college/school. Your 10-year plan may include a full-professorship review, or it may not. We've addressed both approaches in Part I and Part II.

Post-tenure success, we believe, depends on bringing into the discussion the issues involved in having a life. Gaining tenure pushes much of real life aside or in the background, an unfortunate feature of the tenure-track position. For those raising families at the same time, the tenure-track period is particularly challenging. Achieving tenure may have required some difficult decisions and produced a range of outcomes, much like the demands of graduate life produced challenges in one's life, particularly personal relationships. Many friends get lost while one is in graduate school. Unless you've been through this period, it's hard to explain to others that you're not just taking courses towards a degree. Real Life and the decisions needed to integrate your work with your life decisions is the subject of Part III.

Choosing the avenue for meaningful work

Staying the same course. There are many professional choices for life-after-tenure in an academic setting. The traditional appointment for a tenured professor is something like 40-40-20, meaning 40% teaching, 40% research, and 20% teaching. After achieving promotion and tenure your appointment percentage may change depending on program needs and your interests. Changing the appointment, documented in the original appointment letter or modified during the tenure-track period, requires some written documentation after negotiating with your department head or chair.

Concentrating on grant activity. You may want to spend more time on securing grant awards or completing the grants you have. Grant productivity requires overcoming the inertia of the grant process, which involves the appropriate match of proposal to program solicitation, a bounded proposal reflecting sound rationale and experience behind prior results, and sound personnel and budget decisions. You may have completed and documented small and medium-sized grant projects, and with tenure behind you, you may decide to field larger-scale proposals. You may be able to make the case in your yearly workload discussions to increase your percentage of research activity and reduce your teaching load.

Focusing on teaching. Your program and department may have calls for an increase in teaching, perhaps with the addition of new courses or sections. The preparation of new courses increases the teaching workload significantly, especially if the new course is a blended or 100% online course. The increase of online courses may place a demand on tenured-faculty to develop and teach them. The design, development, and teaching of online courses differs dramatically from F2F courses, particularly in the area of efficiency as F2F courses offer many efficiencies when students and instructor are in the same space. At the same time, the studying one's online teaching means writing opportunities, solo or with other instructors and

students. As a tenured professor, you may also need to offer co-teaching slots for graduate students and this activity increases the complexity of teaching.

Moving towards building and growing academic programs. A major aim for academic institutions is securing student enrollment and keeping students in programs. Traditional academic programs are augmenting their curriculum with niche programs or offering minors to students in other programs. Programs geared to the interests of students, rather than on the content itself, is the impetus behind many new programs. Past the tenure-track period, you may be asked to develop new programs at the undergraduate or graduate levels. As with teaching online, the development of online programs is getting more complicated as institutions compete for the attention of students who may be looking for programs that fit their interests.

Achieving a niche specialty. Some faculty members were meant to contribute through service. In my previous book on gaining tenure, I wrote about the possibility of re-examining service activities as Leadership-Service activities where leadership becomes the focus. Service has traditionally been viewed as involvement in different levels of one's profession and one's institutions. During the tenure-track period, you may have worked in your college or profession developing some leadership capacity. More and more leadership is required of everyone and new faculty will be looked to for ideas, then taking the responsibility for seeing-through ideas into action. Service activities may become one's niche specialty and what one is known for. For example, one may become known as a strong teacher and spend a great deal of time in professional development. Here the service and teaching categories blend. At the state level, you may be taking on a leadership role to help those in other academic institutions or state-supported departments and programs. Another example, outside of the institution, is taking on more and more responsibility in professional organizations, such as the editing of journals or organizing conferences or running the professional organization.

Let's get specific and make some decisions

The following sections look at the above avenues in some detail. At the end of Part II, we have provided some specific tools to help you record those decisions and help you get to the real work.

Research and Grantwriting

Teaching: developing online teaching expertise

Teaching

Teaching: developing online teaching expertise

Teaching: development of content area expertise: labs, studios, seminars

Teaching: new forms of teaching events: multiple course/year sequences, program minors

Teaching: augmenting expertise: professional development, specialized skills, cross-training Researching and Writing

Teaching: developing online teaching expertise

Administrating

Teaching: developing online teaching expertise

Advocating

Teaching: developing online teaching expertise

Caveats to planning

There are always consequences. There are tasks that we may not want to do but are necessary to being a community of faculty members. IF your view of faculty life is to “go your own way,” then

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Plans will be plans. There are tasks that we may not want to do but are necessary to being a community of faculty members. IF your view of faculty life is to “go your own way,” then

PLANNING TOOL: Sketching out a 10-year plan

Full professor review

Ten-year plan

CLEANING HOUSE TOOL: Clearing out the paper

Cleaning “house”

ORGANIZING TOOL: Getting organized (again)

Reviewing your organizational strategies

Campus office

Home office

Computing folders/files

Part II Having a Real Life = Keeping Work in Perspective

Setting boundaries (again)

A lot of academic life is about setting boundaries. We can at least agree that each of us cannot do everything we want to do or everything that is asked of us. One way to look at boundaries is what one says Yes or No to.

Saying yes and no. Boundary setting requires an understanding of all parties that (1) we have a choice to say Yes or No, and that there are always consequences for these decisions, and (2) that we do not want to be volunteered for work without our permission. Personally, I want to say “yes,” but please, ask me first. I almost always back out of situations where someone has volunteered me. If you don’t make this boundary clear, your name will go down for every committee, for every special project, and you’ll lose control of your time and the work will be the work of others, not your work.

Saying yes all the time. A variation of this boundary problem is saying YES to everything. Some people want to be seen as a team member or don’t want to be excluded by something that’s important to them and be left out. The hidden danger to saying yes to all requests is that the glow of saying yes in that person’s mind doesn’t last long. Now one has all of these responsibilities on one’s plate and if you fail to complete a report, a project, an email you’ll be known as someone who takes on too much and can’t finish a job. You won’t be remembered by someone who volunteered but as someone who couldn’t follow through.

Faculty role in the college/school. Another way to look at boundary-setting is thinking through one’s role as a faculty member. We advocate a high road, middle-ground approach and that one role for a faculty member is to contribute to the work of the College. This contribution necessitates time spent in governance activities, usually committee work, both standing committees and those ad hoc committees that form up as needed to address faculty and student concerns. We hope that your institution has policies in place that spread out this governance work across the faculty, paying particular attention that tenure-track faculty are not overly committed to committee work.

Communicating your agenda. A lot of conflicts from boundary-setting can be alleviated, reduced, and prevented through better communications between faculty members, administrators, and students. Many of us do not know what our peers are interested in and working on, other than the courses one teaches or the recent grant award. Formal meetings, usually on an annual basis, between you and your department head/chair provide opportunities to brief each other on your needs and department needs. Online faculty profiles, which are frequently updated, provide all constituents with a summary of one’s past and present work. Periodic professional development activities in which faculty share their teaching, research, and service activities serve to update peers on one’s work.

Working Colleagues

Deciding about students, colleagues, and other constituents

Students

College Colleagues

Administrators

Working Colleagues

Coping with academic politics

All work life has its politics and one has to decide on how to handle routine politics across the academic year and the ad hoc politics that spring up during the academic year, keyed by some event.

Routine politics

Ad hoc politics. New administrators: president, provost, dean, department head / chair.

New policies.

The Dean is the Dean is the Dean

The existence of a Dean presents some realities. One, the Dean controls money and your job. And, two, you can take one of several stances: You can choose to suck up to the Dean, work well with a Dean, piss off the Dean, or ignore the Dean.

Living well

Family

Finances

Health

Spirituality

Part III Having Another Life = We All Need a Hobby

Transitioning well

One-trick pony

Hobbies

Volunteer activities

Retirement plans

Running parallel

Developing new skills useful in your position

Developing new skills outside your position

Letting go

Saying goodbye to some of the dreams

Letting go of Plan B's

Investing in the moment

Devil's Dictionary of Post-Tenure Work

Post-tenure

A time varying from one day to many years, where the gun of "tenure track" is removed from one's head.

Post-tenured

A state where one forgets about tenure-track colleagues (pessimistic view) or where one gets on with one's work (optimistic view)

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