



UNIVERSITY OF
ARKANSAS

150
YEARS

Relative to Teaching...

... and Finish Strong!

This is our last Relative to Teaching Newsletter for this academic year; therefore, we have a few thoughts and suggestions for finishing the semester strong—that is with an emphasis on student learning.

*April
2018*



REVIEW YOUR COURSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

- Have you covered the material that you had planned?
- Reevaluate the remaining time in the semester and emphasize essential material that you would like for the students to learn.
- Assess your students' development:
- Based on your course assessment tools (tests, quizzes, skits, essays, etc.) have the students learned the key topics outlined in the syllabus?
- If you have a bimodal distribution of student grades, how do you continue to challenge the top performing students in the class without completely demoralizing the students who are having problems with the course content? Two tried and true methods are: 1) offer review sessions during and/or outside of class time; 2) encourage students to study as a group. The groups could be randomly assigned or at this point in the semester the instructor could purposely assign groups that contain students on both ends of the grade spectrum.

THE FINAL, END OF TERM, EXAMINATION:

- Our final exam schedule allows for two-hour examination periods. With that time limit, keep in mind it can be difficult to ask all of the questions that one would like to ask of the students.

- When considering what to include in the final examination review your course objectives and the material covered. Test the students on the most important concepts that you expected them to have learned throughout the semester.
- Sometimes we have a tendency to create exams that are too long for students to complete in the allotted time. One suggestion is to prepare the test, answer the questions yourself, and then double the amount of time for the students that it took you to answer the test.

MINIMIZE END OF SEMESTER STRESS:

- Students and faculty can be very stressed at the end of the semester. Two methods that minimize student stress are: 1) be very clear about the content and expectations for the final course grade, and 2) help students relax to minimize test anxiety. Relaxation methods include: breathing techniques, concentration exercises, etc.
- If you see that a student is in need of professional counseling, refer him/her to Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS). While we are discussing how to wrap up the semester with a positive emphasis on student learning, this is also a good time to remind everyone to consider planning for your fall classes based on your experiences of this semester.

... Plan for a Great Start!

Just as our Razorback student athletes are in the midst of their current contests or planning and practicing for next season, we faculty need to plan for teaching success and that process starts now. Here are a few suggestions to get you started.

DEVELOP A WINNING GAME PLAN FOR EACH COURSE:

- The first step in planning your next semester course is to develop the course goals and objectives. In many circles, goals and objectives are used interchangeably; however, there are distinct differences. Goals are general “warm and fuzzy” comments that capture the breadth and interest of the course. Whereas, objectives are definitive expectations or learning outcomes. Objectives are typically written using an active tense and action verbs to describe the outcomes. The acronym SMART in many professions refers to objectives that are: specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timed.

CHECK AND DOUBLE CHECK THE PLAY BOOK:

- Our course play book is our syllabus, and just as each coach develops their own personal approach to teaching the team, the same is true with faculty and their course syllabus. Syllabi range from one page to hundreds of pages; however, most view the syllabus as an agreement between the students and the instructor.
- The typical syllabus includes:
 1. Course number and title
 2. Prerequisites and co-requisites
 3. Instructors name and contact information (telephone number, e-mail address, office hours, etc.)
 4. Catalogue description of course
 5. Learning goals and objectives
 6. Instructor’s educational philosophy and teaching procedures
 7. Professional expectations (attendance and tardiness policies, clothing and accessories requirements, general classroom management)
 8. Required or recommended textbooks and supplemental reading materials
 9. Assessment methods used and grading scale that will be used to assign letter grades
 10. Course outline
- The TFSC has a variety to reference materials that contain syllabi information.

If you have questions about your course or teaching techniques, please contact us at the Wally Cordes Teaching and Faculty Support Center, 575-3222 or tfsc@uark.edu

Have a WONDERFUL summer!

April Hot Teacher: Dr. Mary Savin



Mary Savin
Crop, Soil &
Environmental Sciences

SCHOOL/COLLEGE: Dale Bumpers College of Agriculture, Food & Life Sciences

YEARS TEACHING: Mary has been teaching for 6 years.

WHO SHE TEACHES: Mary teaches mainly undergraduate courses and an occasional graduate course.

WHAT SHE TEACHES: Mary teaches freshmen in orientation through seniors in a capstone colloquium course. In between, Mary teaches courses in applied ecology, soils, and analysis of contaminants. She currently has three graduate students she is mentoring through MS and PhD programs.

TEACHING AWARDS: Mary received the Gamma Sigma Delta Teaching Award and is a member of the UA Teaching Academy.

OTHER TEACHING ACTIVITIES: Mary advises several undergraduates each semester and is on the DBCAFLS Advising committee and Curriculum Task Force. She advises the CSES Club which has won many Club Poster Contests at the American Society of Agronomy (ASA) meetings and is an active member in ASA's Resident Education Division. She advises undergraduate students in research projects, including students who have received SURF grants, Honors College grants, DBCAFLS grants, published papers, and received presentation awards. Mary has also mentored three Honors students in their thesis research.

WORDS OF WISDOM: Mary believes that excellent teaching can be and, probably for a lot of us, must be learned and comes with experience and practice. Teaching is not a static field, just as science is not, but is always improving from the results of new research. Try new ideas and practices in the classroom, and do not despair if they do not all work. It is important for us to continually think about and discuss curriculum and teaching practices to stay current, relevant to our students, and effective as teachers. Mary considers it important to be a challenging instructor because learners do not achieve their potential if they are not continually challenged. It is also important to be accessible and to have a positive impact on

Did you know???:

That there are over 30 articles available for faculty on everything from writing the perfect syllabus to improving classroom lectures at the IDEA Center website. These articles are brief (2-6 pages) but chocked full of great tips and ideas. The next time you are looking for a few good ideas, check out the IDEA Center articles at:

<http://www.idea.ksu.edu/>

Exercise is a great way to relieve stress and give you more energy so you can finish the semester strong. Studies have found that 20 minutes of exercise can reduce stress and increase overall energy. There are a number of excellent exercise options available on campus via HPER and faculty can access these options for free or for a minimal cost. So if you are looking to get rid of a little stress and increase your energy, check out all that HPER has to offer at:

<http://imrs.uark.edu/>

Your Opinion Counts:

As co-directors we are continually striving to develop programs and resources that enhance student learning and faculty development at the U of A. We would like your help in planning our future programming. If you have specific suggestions for program content and(or) resource needs, please call us at 575-3222 or e-mail us at tfsc@uark.edu.

Announcements and Friendly Reminders

New Faculty Dead Day Luncheon Discussion (12:00 – 1:30 p.m.)

May 2, 2008 – Visit with our Hot Teachers! Location: Donald W. Reynolds Center, Seminar Room A.

(Please RSVP to Lori no later than Thursday, April 24 – tfsc@uark.edu, or 575-3222).

As you consider your summer plans, you might want to add another book to your reading list. Provost Smith announced at the April Faculty Senate meeting that the UofA was going to pilot a common reading program this fall. They chose “The Devil’s Highway: A True Story” by Luis Alberto Urrea.

*Hogs in the Sweet Sixteen for
the first time in 25 year!!!*

