

**Jim Marquardson**  
*Teaching Philosophy*

I take a learner-centered approach to teaching. When approaching any teaching scenario, I first ask myself what the learners need. With any discipline, there is so much that we want to teach, but there is simply not enough time to cover all content within a single course. Decisions about what material to include and exclude must be made prudently. The learning objectives for courses and individual classes should be defined in a way such that they can be measured and evaluated. Lesson materials, classroom activities, assignments, and assessments should work together support the learning objectives.

While at the University of Arizona (UA), I earned my Certificate in College Teaching. To earn the certificate, I took three courses that taught pedagogical theory and assessed my ability to implement teaching best practices. In addition, instructional experts from the UA Office of Instruction and Assessment and my Information Systems peers sat in my classes and gave me feedback on my teaching methods. Earning the certificate helped to give me a solid foundation upon which to improve my skills as a teacher.

For me, teaching is an iterative process of instruction, practice, and assessment. I firmly believe that for students to truly understand a principle, they must be given the opportunity to practice it. In high school, I had an excellent calculus teacher. When she demonstrated mathematical principles on the whiteboard, everything looked simple. But when I went to practice calculus problems, I often found that I had not learned simply by watching. To fully internalize the mathematical principles, I had to work out the problems on my own. In the classroom, I strive to give students opportunities to exercise their knowledge through discussions, assignments, and examinations. Assessment occurs both formally and informally. Informal assessment occurs continuously in my classroom as I gauge student understanding of the material through things like discussion quality and body language. I assess formally through assignments, quizzes, and examinations. Both informal and formal assessment inform my future teaching decisions. Assessments help me to know if my teaching methods need to be adjusted, if I need to cover more or less material, and how students learn best.

In a business school, one challenge in preparing students for future careers is helping students gain real-world experience. In my opinion, instructional activities can give students real-world experience. Students can gain leadership experience working in groups and managing projects. Eventually, students will learn that the problem of the underperforming team member does not go away once you graduate and enter the business world. The earlier that students can learn strategies for working effectively in teams, the better. Also, instead of simply giving students neatly defined problems from textbooks, I challenge students to go outside of the classroom and evaluate real businesses in the community. When interviewing for jobs, I want my students to be able to use their experience from my classroom to demonstrate the leadership skills and competence that employers are looking for.

The classroom should be a safe place where students are able to explore ideas, voice opinions, and be able to grow. For example, I think that all students need to learn presentation skills; they must be able to get in front of an audience and present an idea. However, I realize that public speaking is one of the most common fears. Therefore, when I have my classes present, I go out of my way to praise any element of a presentation that I thought was good. I give a high ratio of good feedback to helpful criticism. I use techniques such as “sandwiching” (where helpful criticism is placed between two positive statements) to ensure that students are encouraged to continue giving their best while highlighting areas for growth.

I believe that teaching is a skill, and as with any skill, it can be improved through deliberate effort. After delivering a lesson, I reflect on its effectiveness. I make notes on what activities worked well, and what activities should be modified or dropped. Second, I include students in the evaluation. Instead of waiting until after the semester to find out what students think of my teaching through formal course evaluations, I have administered early and mid-course surveys to determine what kind of adjustments I need to make to improve the learning experience. I have made meaningful improvements to instructional content to respond to student concerns every time I have administered these surveys. Lastly, I have invited my peers to observe my teaching methods and provide feedback.

I take my role as a teacher very seriously. I am constantly evaluating my own teaching methods, seeking feedback from my peers, and trying new techniques to achieve better results in the classroom.