

# RODNEY D. KELLER

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## Teaching Philosophy Statement

My teaching philosophy results from being a long-time teacher of varied courses delivered in various ways to various audiences. I have taught in higher education for 39 years. During that time I have taught approximately 13,000 individuals. I have become adept at reading the needs of my students and tailoring instruction to meet those needs. In addition, I have consistently followed course guidelines and professional standards when designing curricula.

My teaching philosophy incorporates two interconnected foundations: learning and teaching. Learning involves students as participating learners while teaching utilizes design, structure, and implementation of strategic pedagogies.

### Learning

Learning honors and values inclusion, belonging, and diversity. My approach to diversity is simple: it's about accepting everyone. I cultivate an academic culture where all students can bring their best selves to the classroom while supporting their individual life endeavors. Teachers must do what it takes to build a more equitable classroom and world.

Learning includes all levels and abilities of students. I believe every person who comes to the university has the right to succeed. I view my job as a facilitator to achieve that goal rather than a gatekeeper to hinder it. Several of the writing classes I have taught address specialized audiences. Explaining something to a future scientist requires different instructions than teaching the same principle to an elementary education major or a business major. I am comfortable addressing multiple audiences in their jargon and context.

Learning enables students to apply knowledge and skills in their lives. Assignments should reflect practical issues and applications. For instance, freshman composition courses should enable first-year students to connect their own personal experiences with positive academic transitions, inquiries, and discourse. And, senior writing courses should incorporate student portfolios to reflect job needs, to analyze employers, and to successfully apply skills, qualifications, and knowledge within their professional worlds.

Learning is collaborative. Collaboration is essential for work efficiency and promotes innovation and unification. Collaboration allows students to build on collective talents, provide productive feedback, increase productivity, ensure overall effectiveness and quality, offer psychological benefits, and contribute meaningfully to the shared task.

Learning requires responsibility and accountability. In fact, teachers need to consistently demand their students' best. Students will often produce significant results, often to their own surprise. This high demand could lead to resentment, but by setting the example of a strong work ethic, responding positively and strongly to each individual, and being grateful for others' contributions, teachers can help others work hard and enjoy the work. The organization of two

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of my courses exemplifies how students work far beyond what they initially assume is their capacity. Students in my business management capstone course and my English capstone course generally produce 50% more documents than other sections. However, these documents include personal and accomplishment statements, 20+ page discipline-specific research reports, leadership portfolios, ethics portfolios, and professional portfolios. Throughout and at the end of the course, I ask students which assignments we should adjust or eliminate, and students insist that I not change the course. They recognize the significance of the assignments and work in their academic and professional careers.

### Teaching

Teaching includes all levels of academic education. I recognize the struggles of in-coming freshmen as they begin to navigate higher education, their disciplines, and their personal lives. I also recognize the anxiety of seniors as they anticipate and prepare for their professional lives. Students learn through their own unique experiences, abilities, and approaches influenced through effective teaching.

Teaching scaffolds concepts and assignments. I understand the need for a scaffolded curriculum to move students from an uneven beginning to a more uniform and successful finishing point where they can be successful in their chosen careers. I have designed, developed, scaffolded, and taught over 30 different writing and literature courses with emphasis in freshman composition, developmental writing, business research and publishing, technical communication, professional writing, and traditional and contemporary literature.

Teaching advances literacy skills, especially reading and writing. I believe in providing my students the best opportunities to succeed in literacy through thoughtful, meaningful instruction, contextual and guided assignments, timely feedback, assessments, and real-world application.

Teaching is interactive and integrated. I use a variety of techniques to deliver instruction. A few strategies I utilize include jigsawing, group grids, analytic teams, 3-minute messages, quick writes, sketch notes, guided notes, engagement logs, case studies, role play, think-pair-share, fishbowls, think-aloud-pair problem solutions, and briefing papers.

Teaching is collaborative. My classroom is a place where small group work and collaboration are privileged. However, this small group work and collaboration are tightly controlled and planned. My lessons include concrete objectives with built-in scaffolding and assessments. I do a formal lesson for every class meeting while remaining flexible with options to address individual needs.

Teaching connects with students. Teachers must know their students. As a teacher, I learn students' names during the first class period. That single effort immediately connects me with students. I circulate around the classroom the rest of the semester, and specifically talk with individuals to become better acquainted and to earn their trust. It is imperative to have direct

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contact with individuals. Colleagues sometimes complain that their work is interrupted when students visit; on the contrary, students are my most important work, and I welcome them.

Teaching should be positive and kind. Teachers must also be kind and considerate towards students. I have never belittled or criticized a student or a colleague in public or in private. I realize that for the most part, people are doing the best they can. Rarely do individuals intentionally make mistakes; rather mistakes often occur because of misunderstandings or inadequate preparation.

Teaching is effective communication. Teachers need to communicate clearly, guide students, and provide adequate resources for students to accomplish specific goals. And teachers need to provide effective and accurate feedback and assessment. Generally, that feedback needs to be positive. For instance, while responding to students' work, I practice positive grading. I focus primarily on what individuals do well to encourage repeated behavior. Yes, I note some needed improvements and make suggestions allowing students to maintain ownership over their work, but students recognize my strong sense of commitment, collaboration, and community..

Teaching requires efficient management and hard work. Excellent teaching often appears effortless. However, teachers need the ability to do a lot of work as well as to inspire a lot of work from others through organizational skills and positive relationships with people. Teachers need to understand and practice scaffolding. From decades of developing lesson plans for my courses, I understand sequence. When looking at a problem, I readily recognize and decide what steps should be first, second, and third. My organizational ability also allows me to break assignments down into smaller steps so that students assigned the task are not overwhelmed. I understand how to budget time and use my allotted time to create strong outcomes. And my organizational skills allow me to make strong connections among disparate entities and to see how they are related. I ask critical questions about an assignment and then make sure that assignment is completed in a timely and appropriate manner.

Teaching requires responsibility and accountability. Teaching does not mean simply posting assignments; rather teaching is empowering others to act on their own while requiring accountability. To help others assume responsibilities for their decisions and work, teachers must ensure that students understand the task and relative facts, consider solutions and consequences, are consistent with professional and institutional standards and values, and communicate their judgments to students, peers, and supervisors.

Teaching is consistent yet flexible. Consistency occurs when teachers and students keep the institution's mission, goals, and objectives central to all endeavors, yet flexibility allows for teachers and students to accomplish tasks in multiple ways using multiple resources.