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teaching philosophy

I have chosen teaching as my profession because I value being in a creative environment where I can help students discover and use the tools necessary to tap into their own creativity.

One of my goals is to encourage students to be well rounded. A well-rounded student is capable of thinking critically and is more competitive in a contemporary market with technical as well as soft skills. My students achieve in not only one or two competencies, but rather all. These include attendance, participation, technical skills, craft, conceptual and critical thinking. Additionally my students are well versed in using the visual-verbal vocabulary needed to succeed in academia and their future endeavors. Students who are successful at critical thinking create their own ideas and come up with new solutions to a visual problem instead of simply looking for what they think the “right” answer is or what has been done before. While academia challenges students to learn quantifiable technical skills, the soft skills such as being on time, reliable, and accountable are the ones that will help students in the contemporary market of design and business.

My philosophy supports learning to recognize and engage what I consider to be five primary principles of design: balance, proportion, sequence, unity and emphasis. One of the most challenging skills to learn is creative persistence, in other words being creative on demand. This includes learning to overcome creative blocks. While there is no formula to overcome this, knowing the process of creative problem solving helps. I build process into the curriculum. I develop course curriculum that creates steps to help walk the students through the process of visual problem solving. Assignments are developed to help students create their ideas through the process of research, thumbnail development, roughs, and the finished project. This allows each student to tap into their creative ideas as well as have multiple opportunities to work through effective and ineffective solutions to a visual problem.

The five principles of design are not limited only to the visual arts; they exist everywhere. I present these concepts to my students using multiple examples to support the visual-verbal vocabulary, as well as from multiple disciplines and their everyday lives. I have found this very useful while they learn to articulate their understanding of ideation using the visual-verbal vocabulary, how and what they are seeing, and the process of visual problem solving. I empower students leaving my classroom with a greater understanding of how to continually access their own creativity.

In order to create a well-rounded student, as described above, I have developed components of evaluation that focus on fostering as well as evaluating growth individually. Emulating both concrete and soft skills in the classroom allows students to observe and prepare themselves for a professional future. Homework assignments, individual projects, tests and quizzes evaluate concrete skills while attendance and participation encourage refinement of professional soft skills which are equally important for success in a work environment. All are important, however if a student has lower skills in one component, they can still earn a passing grade if they excel in the other categories. In this way, my approach to evaluation is holistic and considers the student’s performance from both a broad and narrow perspective.