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“What advice would you give a graduate TA or a new faculty member when it comes to good teaching?”

For somebody starting out on a teaching career, the two things I would suggest are that they ensure diversity and ‘currency’ in their teaching.

By diversity, I mean having varied classroom activities as well as diverse assessment methods. Varied classroom activities ensure that your students’ interest levels remain high. I use some similar class routines (e.g., we start every class by talking about a recent news event or issue) but maintain sufficient variation across my classes with some classes having breakout sessions, others having guest (industry) speakers and yet others discussing some relevant multimedia resource (such as watching and discussing a video clip). By using diverse assessment methods, we can encourage the development of the appropriate skills such as the ability to communicate and do groupwork effectively, skills which are quite important for business students. I find that when I conduct breakout sessions, the quantity and quality of contributions by students goes up significantly.

In our business courses, students place tremendous value on ‘currency’ in the syllabus. While it may not always be possible (or efficient) to substantially change outlines for every round of teaching, a core set of teaching materials can be supplemented with current projects and discussion of current events to make it up to date, which can enhance the value of the course to the students. In my class during the last semester, we pursued a variety of topics relating to Apple including what is its global strategy and how that explains its tremendous success, whether it creates sufficient jobs in the home market and whether the workers at its factories are treated fairly. I also encouraged students to participate actively in the discussion forums which further improves the ‘currency’ of the course.

While there may be some investment of time required every semester for implementing the above suggestions, I believe the results and learning benefits my students enjoy make such efforts worthwhile.