A Few Words From This Year’s Winners...

Mr Tan Wee Kek
Dept of Information Systems, ATEA winner

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

Throughout my five years of teaching in NUS, I have experienced many hard knocks along the way. I hope to share some of my insights with new teachers and hopefully, you will avoid some unnecessary “bruises”.

As teachers, we hope our students will achieve the many pedagogical goals that we intend. But we may not realise that these goals may be very different from what the students have in mind. As such, it is important to explain our teaching goals to students and to align them with theirs so that students will become more interested in what they learn.

Being teachers, we are experts in our own specialised fields and are often blinded to students’ handicaps. We sometimes prepare our materials and structure our teaching as if we are interacting with our peers. The outcome is almost certainly disastrous! Hence, to minimise such occurrences, we need to anticipate the potential problems that students may encounter in their learning and pre-empt them as much as possible in our teaching.

In addition, teachers are busy mortals too, and we are sometimes guilty of neglecting the evaluation of our students’ assignments to the extent of giving them back only a letter grade. However, such a practice defeats the purpose of asking students to work on the assignments. Instead, a fair and transparent evaluation process would include giving the letter grade coupled with useful and actionable feedback, which is critical in helping students learn and improve in their knowledge and understanding of the subject and ultimately sustaining their interest in it.

Last but not least, we should try to make ourselves available to students, especially when they need us the most in their learning journeys. I am not suggesting that we should become our students’ walking stick. But wouldn’t you agree that a friend in need is a friend indeed? Happy teaching!