Christian Bushardt's
Teaching Philosophy

Using an analogy from strategy, a student's position within the stakeholder paradigm can often be viewed as that of a customer; while the university is positioned as the firm with the instructor acting as a salesperson and future employers defining customer needs based on industry problems. As a salesperson, the instructor must develop professional relationships with students to enhance their level of influence and knowledge transfer. Just as with any product/service the salesperson must deliver value while balancing the needs of both the customer/student and the firm/university. I approach the issue of balancing the needs of the student with the needs of the university through a high level of interaction and rigorous course work. While I desire every student to earn an "A" through mastery of the material, I understand students are diverse in experiences, skill levels and desired outcomes.

The student extracts value from the practical understanding of as much material as possible, within the constraints of their own capabilities. The instructor bears the responsibility to optimize student value while also maximizing the return for the university and employers. To maximize value for the university the instructor must pursue a rigorous, but appropriate, course curriculum as they continually try to drive the position of the university forward within the marketplace. As students graduate and take positions within society, they represent the collective efforts of many individuals. We must ensure, for our individual as well as collective sake, students leave with a degree worthy of the efforts rendered unto them. The degree should signal academic and personal achievement through academic honesty, course work, appropriate social skills, and interaction with faculty.

Main Stakeholders of Post-Secondary Education

It is my view that five primary stakeholders exist within the academic paradigm: Universities, Instructors, Students, Businesses, and Society are all major stakeholders within the academic community. Generating value for all five of the stakeholders within the post-secondary education process is of primary importance for the success of the academic community. The collaborative interaction of all five stakeholders results in synergies within the value creation process.

Universities bring in resources from businesses, society and individuals for instructors to use when imparting valuable skills on students. Instructors use these resources to impart practical and valuable skills on students. Universities also work with businesses and society to ensure students learn the skills required by their

industry. In return, Universities extract monetary as well as brand association from the students. Students exiting universities are often associated with institutions as a representative product of the university, furthering enrollment, product sales or donations. Students transfer the valuable skills into lucrative jobs that solve societies' ever changing problems. Graduates bring new products, services and solutions to the human ecosystem, providing society with a return on their investment. Businesses seek valuable skillsets as determined by society through market interaction. Businesses desire employees with skills that align with society's needs in order to secure market share. Businesses and society both support the efforts of post-secondary education as evidence by many a business building signage.

Student Idiosyncrasies

A key element of value creation for requires instructors to impart practical skillsets onto students that will be valuable in the changing marketplace. One of the great paradigms of modern education in the United States, student idiosyncrasies, has a dualistic effect of being a major hurdle, inhibiting student impact and engagement, and a catalyst, enriching student innovation and value. It is the instructor's role to effectively reduce or enhance student idiosyncrasies' based on its value to the learning goal. Student experiences and perceptions vary greatly based on age, income, previous employment, family support and, most importantly, the value of education.

Age:

With "nontraditional" students being common at many colleges, ages can have great variance within a class, or class to class depending on the time of day. Understanding course material's temporal relevance and integrating innovative teaching tools can help overcome differences and increase engagement with the university and course content. Utilizing age differences to enhance classroom examples can help students understand consumers who are different than themselves.

Income:

Different levels of financial support manifest different concerns for faculty, especially as many students try to save money. One way cost cutting methods often impact the student experience is avoiding certain costs such as not purchasing course materials. Working to ensure students understand the value of course materials and other costly education tools is a primary concern with current students. Additionally, many students must work to support themselves during their college career. Work

schedules can take valuable time away from course studying, class time and sleep. Instructors must be understanding of work conflicts, without compromising educational integrity.

Support & Value Perceptions:

Familial and emotional support can make it difficult for some students while offering other students a significant advantage. Families value education very differently from household to household. The instructor must motivate all students and overcome the challenges posed by negative influence. Different levels of support networks impact students in different ways as they move forward in life and their education. Ensuring students understand and have access to community and university resources designed to provide help during times of need is critical for some students' success.

Students hear many different opinions from peers about attending class, doing coursework, studying for exams and the general value of education. Instructors must help students see the real world value of attending class and learning the skills by making courses applicable and effective.

Work Experience:

A student's age is often correlated with the effect of prior and current work experience. Students with work experience are often at a major advantage compared to students without. This is especially true when the prior work experience is in the field of study. Many students lack work experience entirely, making material distant and difficult to digest as they cannot connect conceptual material to work/life experiences. This presents challenges as instructors must provide detailed examples and real world associations for the course material as students are not in a position to provide their own from experience.

Instructor Role in Student Transformation

Many times, it is necessary for the instructor to not only fill a professional education role, but also mentor and serve as a role model representative of what society expects from a professional. The instructor must balance the need for student engagement, individual differences, institutional and governing body requirements, research and service as well as their own personal life.

While there are many strategies instructors can use to mitigate or enhance student idiosyncrasies and ensure an appropriate transfer of valuable skills, below you will find some I have and will most likely continue to use. I am ever adapting to new

methods and innovative teaching tools, the list below is not static but is dynamic, just like the students it is meant to help.

- Providing realistic examples of course concepts by integrating outside material into the classroom increasing the impact of the materials
- Require students to engage in current events relevant to the conceptual course material
- Bring in outside speakers to illustrate how course material is operationalized so students can engage in the world and not just in class
- Create a sense of what the everyday job experience is so students can engage with the industry
- Impart students with an understanding of the field they are studying
- Multimodal exams involving not only multiple choice but essay writing and creativity
- Projects which encourage group collaboration and interaction among peers
- Outside study opportunities or options to pursue the material beyond the basic course requirements
- Provide resources to succeed not only in the classroom, but in the job market and ultimate in society