

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SUPERIOR COLLEGE TEACHER**

*"Few teachers are great; probably none is great at all times. Yet, many teachers are great occasionally." (Milton Hildebrand, 1973). We need to do everything we can to make these occasional times of greatness occur more often!*

*Obviously, it helps any teacher to have been born with charisma, wit, warmth, sparkle, and dynamic enthusiasm. But these aren't the only important qualities for superior teaching, and we can capitalize upon those areas where we already have our greatest strengths.*

*Students are not only motivated by enthusiasm, they are also motivated by organization, clarity, scholarship, and good techniques of classroom conduct. These are in the grasp of any instructor who really cares and truly wants to be good at teaching!*

*It is also encouraging to note that, even small differences are often enough to hold attention a little better or put an idea across more clearly. We simply must believe in ourselves and work at becoming the best instructor possible, considering our individual characteristics.*

*The following ten characteristics have been defined through the works of Milton Hildebrand and Kenneth Feldman. Teachers possessing all of the characteristics are considered "great" teachers by their students, colleagues, and administrators. Teachers who are strong in some of the areas and weak in others are considered fine instructors by some observers and poor instructors by others.*

### **1. Stimulating Style**

- Presents in ways which are interesting and involving
- Uses humor to help maintain attention
- Reinforces every major point with a meaningful referent, - example or illustration
- Relates material to the student's world
- Relates the materials to actual experience in real life
- Focuses on learning which will remain a permanent part of one's life and will be repeatedly used outside of school
- Develop the desire to want to know
- Spend time getting students "psyched-up" to learn

### **2. Ability to Communicate Clearly**

- Puts information across in a clear, understandable manner
- Capable of reducing knowledge to its simplest components
- Ties information together
- Relate theory, principles, and concepts to practical application
- Makes objectives available and clear
- Answers questions completely and freely
- Give feedback regularly and in a manner which helps students learn
- Explains criticisms

### **3. Prepared and Organized**

- Plans for the semester, the unit, the week, the day's activities
- Provides a syllabus containing objectives, bibliography, assignments, lab reports, homework, test schedule, special requirements, grading, guidelines
- Comes to class ready to deal with the topic
- Uses class time effectively and efficiently
- Presents in an organized manner so students can see the relationships within the material
- Highlights main ideas
- Uses instructional aids effectively

### **4. Command of the Subject Matter**

- Knowledgeable in the content area
- Current and up-to-date in the field
- Committed to the field of specialization (reads the literature, attends prof. meetings, etc).
- Maintains contact with colleagues in the field (on and off campus)
- Can demonstrate and illustrate the important aspects, as well as explain them
- Knows the material well enough to emphasize the most important aspects
- Points out the contrasts and implications of various theories and principles
- Relates the more important facts and concepts to related fields of study
- Summarizes to aid learning and retention

## **5. Dynamic Enthusiasm**

- Excited about teaching .....and shows it
- Sincerely interested in the subject matter
- Makes learning a pleasurable experience
- Exudes a positive attitude toward life in general
- Develops own unique style of humanism
- Uses enthusiasm and excitement to improve student attitudes toward both the subject and the instructor
- Will go that extra step to get the students to do whatever is necessary to learn

## **6. Personal Interest in Students**

- Sincerely respects students and conveys this helping, caring attitude
- Makes it clear that he/she wants to help students learn
- Takes the time and effort to know the students and their needs
- Works with each student as an individual
- Talks with students, both in and out of class
- Helps students answer their own questions
- Is valued for advice on other than class problems, as well as in-class activities

## **7. Interactive Skills**

- Perceives student needs and keeps informed on individual progress
- Uses student reaction and feedback to improve and guide actions
- Accurately reads and communicates nonverbal signals
- Senses when the class does not understand
- Looks at students when talking to them, in or out of class - eye contact shows real awareness
- Makes an effort to get students to know each other
- Praises successful performance to motivate future learning

## **8. Flexibility, Creativity, Openness**

- Uses a variety of presentation styles and methods
- Breaks up each period into at least three different activities
- Works with different students differently
- Changes approach to meet new situations
- Tries new and different ideas periodically
- Constantly searching for new ideas, approaches and methods
- Open to student suggestions on content, methods, and projects
- Uses individuality and originality in arranging teaching-learning activities

## **9. Sound Character**

- Has integrity and honesty in all dealings with students
- Is up-front with all rules, regulations, and special requirements with no hidden expectations
- Does not change the rules without careful justification to the students
- Uses great care and fairness in grading and testing
- Maintains confidentiality with students
- Is willing to risk being wrong and then correct errors made
- Has patience and understanding for the beginner

## **10. Commitment**

- Demonstrates the sincere desire to teach
- Makes teaching the number one priority
- Accepts the restrictions and the work necessary to do the job right
- Does what must be done to keep students apprised of their progress, successes, and needs
- Seeks student, colleague, and administrator feedback for improvement purposes
- Accepts criticism and suggestions as positive signs for change
- Constantly looking for new and better ways to teach
- Shares the best ideas with colleagues for their improvement