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## Expert Blind Spot and University Teaching

Amber Esping  
Education



*“My professor is too smart to teach us. She just doesn't get why we don't get it.”*

*“Our professor sometimes forgets to tell us stuff that is really important. He acts like it should be obvious, but it isn't.”*

Comments like these occasionally show up on E-SPOTs or in informal conversations among college students. While upsetting, it is important to pay attention when students say these kinds of things. These statements provide evidence that our hard-won expertise in a particular domain may in fact be causing problems with our teaching. This short article will explain why this might happen and offer some suggestions for what can be done about it.

Those of us who teach in the College of Education must sometimes contend with the unflattering folk theory, “those who cannot do, teach others.” There isn't any compelling empirical evidence to support this stereotype, and we prefer to be guided by William Pope's adage, “Let him teach others who himself excels.” Highly effective teachers—and this includes college professors—must not only demonstrate excellence in their domains of expertise, but also master a complex constellation of pedagogical and communication skills and dispositions related to teaching and learning of their particular subject areas. In the College of Education, we refer to this set of skills and dispositions as “pedagogical content knowledge.” A master teacher, then, has expertise in two domains: content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge.

When reading the narrative portion of the SPOTs, professors are sometimes confronted with the realization that our students don't think we've mastered pedagogical content knowledge. There is a folk theory that goes along with this too, and it is the inverse to “those who cannot do, teach others.” It goes like this: “Those who can do, cannot teach others.” And there actually is some compelling theoretical and empirical evidence to back this up.

The Expert Blind Spot (EBS) hypothesis maintains that “educators with advanced subject-matter knowledge of a scholarly discipline tend to use the powerful organizing principles, formalisms, and methods of analysis that serve as the foundation of that discipline as guiding principles for their students' conceptual development and instruction, rather than being guided by knowledge of the learning needs and developmental profiles of novices” (Nathan & Petrosino, 2003, p. 906). As professors, it is important to understand that expert thinking is qualitatively different from novice thinking. Experts don't just know more than novices. They know *differently*. Professors who do not take this into account may make implicit (and incorrect) assumptions about what students need, and what they are, and are not, understanding. They will find it difficult to empathize and communicate with the novices in their classrooms. The students wrongly interpret these problems of domain expertise as their professor being “too smart” to teach. But they are right that expertise can hurt teaching.

Expert knowledge is structured like a vast, interconnected rhizome rather than the neat linear outlines students create in their notebooks. It is highly schematized, contextualized, and organized around conceptual structures and patterns that guide how problems are represented and understood. This may make it hard for an expert to present material in the nice linear package that students may be expecting, but it also makes it hard to disentangle the knowledge in the first place. So many of the facts and connections are implicit,

which means that experts may forget to include important steps, facts, or processes. They may also make wrong assumptions about what is easy and what is difficult for their students.

EBS problems can be avoided when professors take the time to develop pedagogical content knowledge in their domain. One obvious answer is to visit the Koehler Center and make use of the resources available there. If you'd prefer to work on your own, a great place to start is an e-book called [How People Learn: Minds, Brains, Experience, and School](#), which can be downloaded for free from National Academies Press. This book examines research on expert and novice knowledge (among many other relevant pedagogical issues), and offers practical implications for teaching in history, mathematics, and science. If you don't have time to read another book (and who does, right?) a quick way to minimize EBS in your teaching would be to purposefully cultivate empathy for the novice mind. Observe yourself metacognitively when you learn new things and reflect on past learning experiences. If you have always been really good at what you are currently teaching, spend some time thinking about your learning process for things you weren't/aren't so good at. This small thing may make a big difference in your ability to relate to your students and communicate with them in ways that will eventually develop their own expertise.

#### References

Bransford, J. D., Brown, A. L., & Cocking (Eds.), *How people learn: Brain, mind, experience, and school*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.

Nathan, M. J., & Petrosino, A. (2003). Expert Blind Spot among preservice teachers. *American Educational Research Journal*, 40(4), 905-928.

# KOEHLER C E N T E R EVENTS

## An Introduction to Team-Based Learning and Immediate Feedback Testing

Team-Based Learning is a special form of collaborative learning that uses a specific sequence of individual work, group work, and immediate feedback to create a motivational educational setting. In this hands-on workshop with Dr. Dan Brown, Team-Based Learning expert and consultant-trainer, participants will learn to transition from traditional lecturing to methods that guide students to learn on their own; strategically form teams in which students work together; motivate students to come to class prepared and ready to learn; and apply the power of the Immediate Feedback Assessment Technique (IF-AT®) "scratch and win" method to engage students in collaborative learning.



**Thursday, February 20, 2014**  
**1:30 PM - 3:30 PM**  
**BLUU Ballroom 3301C**

Go to the [Koehler Events website](#) for more information and to register.



# A Conversation on Teaching and Learning with the Patron of Educators, Marcus Fabius Quintilianus

Richard Leo Enos  
English



## Overview

Quintilian (c.35 AD-c.100 AD), educator and holder of the first imperially endowed chair of rhetoric at Rome, is commonly regarded as the Patron of Educators. His monumental work, *Institutio Oratoria*, was composed after his retirement as a distinguished and beloved teacher for the imperial families of Rome and became, over the centuries, the single most important work on education in the history of the West. Quintilian believed that education was essential both for the growth of the individual and also for serving the state through effective leadership. Quintilian's observations speak directly to many of our present-day concerns about literacy and effective communication. His copious twelve-volume work provides detailed guidelines from early childhood to adult education. This essay identifies Quintilian's most salient observations concerning teaching and learning. These maxims will then be discussed in light of contemporary perspectives and concerns about teaching and learning at TCU and across the nation.

## Background

Education was seen as central to the development of the individual in both Athenian and Roman societies. Both ancient societies believed that education not only produced the best version of each individual but that each individual would, in turn, serve the community through unifying wisdom and eloquence. Ancient Greeks had a concept called

*paideia*. This notion expressed the unshakable belief that education itself was the virtue of intellectual excellence. Greeks considered education a virtue because they believed that one became not only more of an informed citizen through education but also a better person. In fact, the term *metamorphosis* was used to express the idea that education transformed each of us into a better version of ourselves. The Romans had their own Latin term that was the equivalent of the Greek term *paideia*. The Roman term was *humanitas*. Like the ancient Greeks, the Romans also believed that education was the key factor for excellence and had an even greater emphasis on service to the state.

Many believed that Greeks established the first schools as we think of them in the West, such as Plato's Academy or Aristotle's Lyceum. However, Romans argued that these were schools by the "star" system, such as the school of the famous educator, Isocrates. Romans, however, claimed that they developed the "school" as a regular, systematic curriculum, not by the star system but as a normal part of education. Regardless, schools were a regular feature for boys and girls in Roman society. By Quintilian's time schools were in place, but Quintilian re-conceptualized the notion of education in his *Institutio Oratoria*.

Below are some of his insightful views on education. When we hear these views of Quintilian we should think about their implications today and if our current research supports Quintilian's recommendations.

1. Education must begin early and the teacher must be of sound moral character, for the teacher leads the student by example and strict self-discipline. Teachers who cannot meet the same expectations that they set for their own students will be viewed by their students as hypocrites and not taken seriously.
2. No corporal punishment may be inflicted upon students. Such acts of violence will discredit the educator in the

eyes of the student and encourage the child to associate education with fear, abuse and punishment rather than joy and reward.

3. Do not over-praise the student. It devalues the reward and does not give the student a goal of a high standard of excellence. Students will seek the approval of their teacher naturally but that praise should be well measured.
4. Avoid over-burdening students with excessive work. This is especially true at night where they should be free to relax from a hard day's labor or, if they wish, to read and study for sheer pleasure and enjoyment but not out of fear or obligation of requirements.
5. Eloquence is achieved by careful attention to writing, reading and speaking. This is the foundation for our youth and for our civilization. Through such practices students will develop critical thinking skills, learn to express their thoughts and sentiments in public arenas, and be able and willing to debate publically questions of value and preference for the greater good. Of all, the pen brings the most labor but the most profit. The foundation of eloquence is in writing.
6. An excellent student must have three necessary components: talent, practice and experience. A strong memory, one that is quick and retentive, is a sure sign of excellence.
7. Students should be exposed to models of excellence and encouraged to imitate their models. Again, these models must be of high integrity, otherwise students will learn, but learn the wrong things. The obligation to "un-teach" is harder than teaching.
8. Expect the best from your students; set your expectations high and give them the confidence to try and attain

lofty goals. Failure is no disgrace, if one seeks lofty goals. In such cases, we should always encourage students to try again and reward their effort. It is for this reason that patience and hard work are seen as virtues and not vices. Few things that come easily are worthwhile or deeply appreciated if they are not earned.

## KOEHLER **EVENTS**

C E N T E R

### **Strategically Designing Teaching Methods to Achieve Learning Outcomes**

In this hands-on luncheon with keynote speaker Dr. Dan Brown, Team-Based Learning expert and Director of Faculty Development at Palm Beach Atlantic University, faculty will learn to describe the dynamics of the Outcome-Centered Learning Model; explain how the three elements of critical thinking relate to Bloom's Taxonomy; identify the components of engaged learning and develop new teaching strategies; and implement Socratic questioning techniques to enhance student participation.



**Thursday, February 20, 11:30 AM - 1:00 PM**  
**BLUU Ballroom 3301D**

Go to the [Koehler Events website](#) for more information and to register.

Quintilian has given us much to think about. What are your thoughts about his views on education and their relevance for TCU today?

Suggested Readings:

Enos, Richard Leo. *Roman Rhetoric: Revolution and the Greek Influence*. Revised and expanded edition. Anderson SC: Waveland Press, 2009.

Marrou, H. I. *A History of Education in Antiquity*. Trans. George Lamb. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1982, reprinted from the 1956 edition.

Murphy, James J., Richard A. Katula, and Michael Hoppmann (eds.). *A Synoptic History of Classical Rhetoric*. Fourth edition. New York and London: Routledge, 2014.

Quintilian. *Institutio Oratoria*.

## Student Engagement Strategies: Small Groups and Teams

Thursday, February 27, 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM  
Winton-Scott 115

The Small Groups / Teams Student Engagement Strategies workshop will discuss the benefits of incorporating small group work or student teams into your curriculum. In addition to providing information on team-based and problem-based learning, we'll examine sample assignments, rubrics, and evaluation methods for these participation models.

Register on our [workshop page](#).



## Debate as a Pedagogical Tool

[Michael Strausz](#)  
Political Science

One of the things that surprised me when I first got involved with interscholastic debate (I was a high school policy debater and later a coach) was that the most successful and enthusiastic debaters were not always the most successful classroom students. Many excellent debaters did not feel challenged by their courses, and for those students the promise of good grades was not a sufficient incentive to work hard. However, those students did feel challenged by debate; the idea of travelling around the state (and, for those who really excelled, the country) with the possibility of winning trophies and bragging rights motivated those students in a way that grades could not.

I began to use debate assignments in my political science classes with a view toward capturing that advantage of debate. I want to give students who might not be motivated by grades another motivation to learn and become invested in the material. In classroom debates, students are motivated by pride; they want to convince their classmates that their team has made the superior arguments.

I establish debates around a policy proposition, and I take care to find a position with strong evidence on each side. For example, in my International Politics course students have debated whether the United Nations Security Council should authorize the use of force against the Assad regime in Syria, and in my Politics of Japan class students have debated whether Japan should amend its constitution to remove Article IX (the Article which forbids Japan from having a military). Each student participates in one debate per

semester, and I randomly assign students to a topic (which they receive a week before the debate) and a side. Ideally debate teams have four or five students each, with each student having a clearly defined job (either one speech or asking questions during cross-examination). Speech times are clearly delineated, and I am strict about enforcing them so that each student has a chance to participate and we can finish in one class period. I also give students a few minutes before each speech to prepare. Students not participating in a particular debate serve as a “jury” and fill out ballots after the class explaining which team they think won and why.

When I introduce the debate format and assignment at the beginning of the semester, I make a distinction between two types of argumentation: argumentation with a view toward proving that one’s side is right, and argument with a view toward uncovering the truth. I believe that both kinds of argumentation are important for global citizens. Being able to successfully advocate for a given side is a useful skill in many professions, including sales and the law. However, in my view, it is even more important that global citizens have the capacity to participate in argumentation for discovering what is true and right. To nurture this impulse, I require all students to write a reflection paper about how the experience of preparing for and participating in the debate has influenced their thinking on the topic. This is students’ chance to think through the topic on their own.

I have kept records on these reflection papers, which are summarized in **Table 1**. Of the 224 students that I gathered data on, only 35 ended up agreeing with the side that they were not assigned to. This group of 35 was more likely to attend class regularly and more likely to be a political science major or minor than were those that ended up agreeing with the side that they were assigned to. Perhaps those who attend more courses, political science majors, and political science minors are more likely to reach their own conclusion because they feel more investment in and

ownership of the material. This data serves as a challenge to me as an instructor—in the future, how can I give students the intellectual tools and confidence to review a variety of arguments and reach their own conclusions?

**Table 1: Students views of their debate topic as stated in their post-debate reflection papers**

	Disagree with (randomly assigned) side in debate	Agree with (randomly assigned) side in debate
Total number of students	35	189
Percent female	54.30%	43.40%
Median final course grade	85.01%	85.20%
Median percent of classes attended	91.89%	86.67%
Mean year in school (1 is freshman, 4 is senior)	2.89	2.93
Percent political science major or minor	57.14%	44.97%

Students tend to love the debates, as is clear both from the enthusiasm with which they participate and their comments in course evaluations at the end of the semester. I believe that debates work, particularly in political science classes, because they require students to find and articulate arguments in favor of a position (whether or not they agree with it). Debates do this in a way that is relatively novel and fun, but also intellectually rigorous. Ultimately, though,

debates are most successful when they cause students to realize that the side that they were assigned to may not be correct, to think through all of the best arguments for and against a proposition, and to reach their own conclusion.

I invite you to [visit my website](#) for a sample debate format handout, debate reflection paper assignment, and debate ballot.

## Writing and Providing Observation Feedback

Monday, March 3, 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM  
Tandy Boardroom 120

or

Wednesday, March 5, 2:00 PM - 3:30 PM  
Winton-Scott 115

In this hands-on workshop, we'll discuss strategies and best practices for writing and providing feedback to peers after a teaching observation. We'll cover organizing observation letter content, framing feedback for improvement, and making the process valuable for all parties involved. The goal of this workshop is to help you--and the colleagues you observe--become more reflective and intentional educators in the TCU community.

Register on our [workshop page](#).



## Veterans in the Classroom

Peter Worthing  
History and Geography  
and Koehler Center Fellow

Early on in my academic career, I did poorly in a job interview and learned an important lesson. The representatives of this particular university asked me how I would handle students who said they "did not have time to complete a paper assignment or prepare for an exam." In my response, I tried to demonstrate my academic "gravitas," assuring them that I would be no pushover for 18-22 year olds who must learn how to manage their time properly. Only later, when it was clear that I would not get the coveted campus interview, did I realize my mistake. The university in question had a large population of non-traditional students who had families and full-time jobs, quite different from the traditional college aged students I had referred to during the interview. I then realized that if I wanted to succeed as a faculty member, not to mention as a job applicant, I must be more aware of the different backgrounds, experiences, and circumstances of the students. Lesson learned.

Last spring, a student opened my eyes to the fact that faculty members need to be mindful of a new group of students who have been arriving on U.S. college and university campuses in large numbers: veterans of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Joey Phan, an Army Airborne infantryman who served one year in Afghanistan, came to my office at the beginning of the semester to introduce himself and talk about the class. We talked several times over the course of the semester and he told me a bit about his military service and his experiences in adjusting to life as a college student. During the course of our conversations, it occurred to me that recently I have had several student veterans in my



classes and many might face some of the same issues and concerns that Joey and I talked about.

Over the last several years, several hundred thousand veterans have taken advantage of the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill to enroll in colleges and universities across the country. At TCU we have approximately 335 students taking advantage of the G.I. Bill, many of whom saw combat service in Afghanistan and/or Iraq. These students bring a set of experiences and perspectives to their classes that few traditional aged college students can match. Yet they also face certain realities that can make their transition from military service to college campus difficult. For example:

- Many are married and have children
- Many live off campus, sometimes facing a considerable commute
- Some may still serve in the Reserve which can pose scheduling conflicts
- Most are older than 25 and sometimes find it difficult to relate to their younger classmates
- Some may be dealing with ongoing medical or psychological issues, such as PTSD
- Issues such as the recent government shutdown can complicate their access to benefits
- Military schedules tend to be highly structured, while academic life can be rather flexible
- Military service means following directions, while academic work requires self-direction

As is the case with any student, it is important that faculty members be mindful of the challenges student veterans might face and be prepared to offer support. While there is no centralized office for dealing with student veteran affairs, there are resources on campus to assist veterans and faculty members. TCU's Veterans Affairs Officer Ricardo Avitia works in the Registrar's Office and assists student veterans with a variety of issues. April Brown, Assistant Director of Intercultural

Services, serves as chair of the TCU Veterans Task Force (VTF), which works to create a "veteran-friendly" campus. The VTF holds orientation sessions, facilitates peer support, and organizes events to help student veterans engage with the larger TCU community and feel more at home on campus. Beyond the confines of the TCU campus, the website of the [Student Veterans of America](#) has links to a variety of support programs, including *Veterans on Campus*, a web-based training module for students, faculty, and staff that offers information on a variety of issues relevant to student veterans.

Despite these resources, there is more that TCU can do for student veterans, such as create a centralized office for student veteran affairs, increase the number of academic tutors available, and/or designate a permanent space for student veterans to gather. I have spoken to a number of faculty colleagues who feel their classes have benefitted from the presence of student veterans and it seems that they have much to offer the TCU community. Yet as faculty members, it is worth bearing in mind that these students may face a variety of issues or circumstances that might make their college experience more challenging than one might think.

## Student Engagement Strategies: Case Studies

Wednesday, April 9, 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM  
Winton-Scott 108

The Case Studies Student Engagement Strategies workshop will introduce the benefits of incorporating case studies into your teaching. We'll examine sample assignments, rubrics, and evaluation methods to help you and your students get the most out of case studies.

Register on our [workshop page](#).



## An Adjunct's Perspective

Jensen Elise Branscombe  
History and Geography

It began this summer when I anxiously watched my enrollment numbers creep up so I could feel confident that my classes would “make.” With the creative scheduling of a supportive department chair, I got enough classes to teach this fall to get by financially. I know many in higher education are struggling to make ends meet, but as I embarked on my new life as an adjunct instructor this fall, my financial security was among my top concerns. Little did I know then that my paycheck would be only one of a number of challenges I faced during the course of the semester. Because I am making a living as an adjunct, I was grateful for as many classes as I could get. But that meant I had a busy schedule with a heavy teaching load, lots of students, and what seemed like a constant stack of papers to grade. Of course, there are much harder and lower paying jobs out there and I recognize that I am fortunate to be doing something that I love. Even so, working as an adjunct is hard! I learned the challenges of the job pretty quickly, but over the course of the semester, I also learned some lessons that helped me make it through.

Teaching as an adjunct presented some unexpected problems for me. I care deeply about pedagogy and have developed class activities and assignments that encourage reflection and discussion. Instead of focusing on developing the best kind of learning classroom environment I could, I found myself wondering how I would manage so many students or how I could craft assignments that develop good writing and critical thinking skills when I would have to grade

all of those papers. Then there was the neglect of my own research and writing. When do I get to that article I've been planning? Do I have time to write a conference paper? And what about those dissertation revisions? Added to the work challenges was the anxiety about “real life” issues: finding full time employment, the loss of my health insurance (thanks to the Affordable Care Act this will not be an issue come January 1), and the cut in income.

The teaching/research/life balance, I've discovered, is a challenge for most in the academy. As the semester proceeded, I had a number of conversations with my colleagues and sought their advice on finding the balance. As a result of those conversations, and my own reflection on the past four months, I feel that I have learned a number of valuable lessons in the course of this challenging semester.

### **Make Time for Your Own Work**

This was the piece of advice I received most often (and the lesson that was the hardest for me to learn). As academics, our own research nourishes us and makes us better and more passionate teachers. It is also the most important part of our professional lives that we take with us as we move institutions. Being on the full-time job market, I value the teaching experience and I take student evaluations seriously, but it will be the work I produce as a scholar that will be the most important factor in getting a tenure-track position.

### **Develop Relationships with Faculty**

This was the lesson I enjoyed learning the most. As a graduate student, my relationships with my advisor and other mentors were incredibly important, but as I moved into “the profession,” those relationships became even more meaningful and fulfilling as I found myself asking a whole new set of questions of my mentors. As a young professional, conversing with junior faculty and the seasoned veterans helped me through the semester. They offered support, encouragement, and collegiality.

## Have Fun

I reminded myself, often, that I am doing what I love, what I worked for a long time to do. The hours are long and there is always something to grade, but I am teaching and learning from students and deepening my own understanding of a subject for which I am passionate. Some mornings it was tough to feel enthusiastic about class, but, more often than not, I left the room at the end of the period feeling energized and inspired. I get to work on a college campus, I get to attend all of the scholarly, sporting, and artistic events on campus, and all I have to do to get to a great academic library is walk across the street. What a fun job.

I recently graduated with my PhD, which means that during the last several years I have finished challenging coursework, taken grueling comprehensive exams, and completed and defended a doctoral dissertation. Despite those challenges, it was during this past semester that I found myself thinking, "this is the hardest thing I've done." Yet, it is all worth it. I'm teaching and still learning, and if I stop to think about it (in between grading final exams) I might also realize that I'm having the time of my life.



## To Share or Not to Share: A Question of Cell Phone Numbers

Gina Hill

Nutritional Sciences and Koehler Center Fellow



Do TCU faculty routinely give their cell phone numbers to students? Is it the norm at TCU for the average undergraduate student? Is this what our students and administration expect?

This conversation began over lunch during the Koehler Center faculty focus lunch last semester. A professor had just overheard a Monday at TCU student leader tell a group of excited high school seniors, "Our faculty give their cell phone numbers to their classes. You can contact them any time." Some faculty at our table considered this fairly normal while others believed it was highly unusual. Personally, my junior-

## Faculty Focus Panel: Peer Evaluation

Tuesday, March 4, 11:30 AM - 1:00 PM Smith 104B

Register on our [workshop page](#).



David Jenkins



Nadia Lahutsky



Charlotte Hogg

This discussion will focus on strategies and best practices for peer teaching evaluations. Our panel includes: David Jenkins, Professor and Chair, Department of Social Work, Nadia Lahutsky, Associate Professor and Chair, Department of Religion, and Charlotte Hogg, Associate Professor and Director of Writing Composition and Rhetoric, Department of English. Lunch is included.

and senior-level students enrolled in the dietetics programs in our department have my cell phone number. I ask them to contact me if there is an emergency. I give examples, such as if they are too sick to make it to a site where a preceptor for our program expects them or if there is another issue that they feel is urgent. I've never felt that any one of the students has abused what I consider to be a privilege. However, I also specifically ask them not to text or call me late at night to ask me something that can wait until the next day or can easily be discussed during office hours, over my office phone, or via email. I have a young family and feel these boundaries are healthy and appropriate.

While I frequently respond to emails late at night, I also feel that emails are easy to postpone answering without fear of forgetting to respond altogether. To be clear: it is not that I dislike the thought of a student texting me. I dislike texting in general. I am prone to miss or forget to respond to texts from my husband, siblings, and friends. They know me well and are not likely to think that I am ignoring them. It may stand to reason, then, that until the conversation at the faculty focus lunch, I never considered giving my cell number to the ~150 students enrolled in the lecture course I was teaching.

At the end of last semester, I conducted a completely unscientific iClicker survey of students enrolled in said lecture class. Among the 93 respondents present the day before Thanksgiving break, 47% reported that they had been provided with TCU professors' cell numbers. Of that 47%, only 19% had ever called or texted a faculty member. Interestingly, 43% of students reported that they wish they were provided with their professors' cell numbers while 57% did not have the same desire. As faculty, we know student expectations can change quickly from one year to the next as the incoming class of scholars arrives, so it's hard to anticipate our future students' needs and wishes.

When asked his opinion on the matter, Dr. Phil Hartman, Dean of the College of Science and Engineering, shared

that he includes his cell number on his syllabus because he encourages students to contact him outside of class. He revealed, "In practice very few, if any, do. Many will email instead." Dean Hartman explained that although it works for him, he certainly respects the decision of other faculty not to share their cell numbers.

Provost Nowell Donovan stated that he believes it is a good practice for faculty to share their cell numbers with students. "We offer a 24/7 student experience at TCU." The Provost provides his cell and home numbers to his students and went on to add, "Why not? Dealing with emergencies and problems is part of the expectation of a TCU teacher-scholar."

Faculty members will eventually address these questions for themselves. Should faculty routinely provide all students with their cell phone numbers? Under what circumstances should faculty share personal numbers? Does this improve or impede student learning and independence? If shared, what parameters should be set regarding what times are acceptable to text or call and how quickly should students expect a response? Thankfully, we don't have to know all the answers before we make our next set of syllabi.

## Peer Teaching Evaluation Strategies

Monday, February 10, 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM Smith 104A or  
Thursday, February 13, 2:00 PM - 3:30 PM Winton-Scott 115

In this hands-on workshop, we'll discuss strategies and best practices for peer teaching evaluations. The Koehler Center staff will share observation and evaluation rubrics, discuss innovative evaluation methods, and provide suggestions for post-evaluation reflection. The primary goal of this workshop is to help you--and the colleagues you observe--become more reflective and intentional educators in the TCU community.

Register on our [workshop page](#).



## Beyond the Classroom: How Mental Health Can Impede Academic Success

Cortney Gumbleton  
Counseling and Mental Health Center

Each year, TCU becomes home to thousands of students from across the world. These students navigate a path through their college years, experiencing the highs and lows associated with the transition from late adolescence to early adulthood. Inevitably, many of these students will experience temporary distress over roommate disputes, financial pressures, painful break-ups, and academic failures. These hurdles may be challenging when they occur, but generally they are short-lived and cause little disruption over the college trajectory. But for some, the college years are associated with more serious problems, which can be destructive not only for the students experiencing them but also the students around them.

TCU has experienced a rash of suicides within the last few years. Nationally, suicide is ranked as the second leading cause of death among college students with over 1,100 students who die by suicide each year. The sad reality is that of these, less than 10% sought counseling. Mental illness is on the rise on American college campuses, and the TCU campus is not immune.

Mental health experts attribute the rise to two distinct groups of students who may be at a higher risk for suicide, including students with pre-existing mental health conditions prior to their entrance into college and students who develop mental health issues during college years. Due to the prevalence of depression and suicide on campus, the TCU Counseling and Mental Health Center is reaching out to faculty to

ask for your help in identifying and referring students who may be depressed and at an increased risk for suicide. If left unaddressed, these problems can have serious, lasting consequences—one in ten college students say they have seriously considered suicide within the last year.

Considering these staggering statistics, the TCU Counseling Center implemented a new suicide prevention and awareness training called QPR (Question-Persuade-Refer). This suicide prevention training program is a nationally-recognized, empirically based program designed to educate faculty and students about suicide and the resources available for those needing professional services. The QPR workshop lasts only 90 minutes and is intended to teach faculty, staff, and students how to recognize the warning signs of suicide, persuade them to seek help, and refer them to campus resources. In fall of 2013, campus QPR trainers provided 23 trainings, reaching over 650 faculty, staff, and student leaders. Please contact me if you are interested in scheduling QPR for your classroom.

Although, students may only spend three hours a week in your class, your position gives you a unique opportunity to become aware of problems facing students that may put them at risk for suicide. Often, faculty see the first glimpse of a student in trouble and may be the first person a student turns to for assistance. Certain students directly verbalize to their instructors that they are sad, depressed, or need help. On the other hand, some students choose to disclose through emails, papers, or other writing assignments that they may be experiencing distress.

Students report having experienced a myriad of academic difficulties exacerbated by their mental health conditions. TCU's National College Health Assessment, conducted by the American College Health Association, lists stress, anxiety, and depression as top impediments to academic success. In a recent survey, half of all college students reported being so

stressed that they could not complete their academic work at some point during the last semester.

A considerable amount of students indicated that mental health problems affected their individual academic performance to the point of receiving an incomplete, dropping a class, or receiving a lower grade in a class, on an exam, or on a project. It is understandable how these students are more likely to dropout of school than their peers. In fact, researchers estimate 5% of all college students never finished school due to a mental illness. Many authors suggest that attrition is more often attributed to emotional rather than academic factors. The academic consequences of poor mental health not only affect a struggling student, but also

impact the campus in terms of lost tuition, fees, and alumni donations. Overall, it is in the best interest of the student, campus, and community to respond to a student in distress.

It is necessary to intervene if you feel there is reason to be concerned about a student. The Counseling Center has a counselor on call during regular business hours Monday through Friday. Walk-in crisis appointments are available, or students can call 817-257-7863 to schedule an appointment. In the event of an after-hours emergency, a counselor can be reached by calling the TCU Police at 817-257-7777. There is also a free and confidential national hotline where students can talk to a trained crisis counselor 24/7. The number to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

## **A TCU Partnership with RUOK?: Recognizing Students in Distress**

Tuesday, February 18, 2:00 PM - 3:30 PM Winton-Scott 115  
or Wednesday, February 19, 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM Smith 104A

Suicide is a primary cause of death among college students. One in ten college students reported having seriously considered suicide within the last year. The goal of the TCU R U OK? suicide awareness campaign is to help students on the issues related to suicide, and one way to do this is by educating faculty.

In this workshop, offered in partnership with TCU's R U OK? campaign, faculty will learn how to recognize the warning signs of suicide in the classroom. Faculty will complete the QPR (Question-Persuade-Refer) Suicide Prevention Program, which is a nationally recognized suicide prevention program designed to educate faculty about suicide prevention and the resources available for those needing professional services. The workshop and training will provide guidelines on how to Question a student about potential suicidal thoughts, Persuade them to seek help, and Refer them to available campus resources.

Register on our [workshop page](#).