Carmon 07 – Teaching

Introductory Statement

This statement describes my effectiveness as a teacher, highlighting how my teaching meets the university mission, describing my teaching approach, providing both peer and student evaluations of my teaching, and finally describing my reputation as a mentor.

In my time at IUPUC, I have taught a rotating selection of Communication Studies courses to both majors and non-majors from introductory level (COMM-G110, G100, C180) to our upper division classes (COMM-C482, C380, C393, C394, C395). My classes have ranged in size from 5 to 38 students, allowing me to truly meet the individual needs of my students. The specific goals vary by class, but I view my teaching as playing a vital role in the development of students' understanding of communication from the basics of defining the Communication Studies discipline, through depth of understanding specific communication theories (i.e., Symbolic Interactionism, Systems Theory), and ultimately their ability to engage in the research process applying their knowledge of communication to a topic area of their choice.

Evidence of Teaching Effectively to Campus/College Mission and Goals

I view my teaching as one of contributing to the fulfillment of campus/college goals. This is evidenced by my actions of creating courses needed in the Communication Studies curriculum, flexibility in teaching a large variety of courses to meet retention and graduation goals, and teaching to the Principles of Undergraduate Learning (PULs).

Since I began at IUPUC in 2010, I have taught 12 different course preparations with a 3-3 teaching load with a one course reduction to coordinate the IUPUC Communication Studies program. Several of these courses had never been offered on IUPUC's campus and had to be put through the remonstrance process before I was able to teach them. As such, I have taught at least one new course preparation each semester at IUPUC, with some semesters having more than one new course preparation. As explained briefly in my Candidate Statement, I have taught a combination of introductory Communication courses as well as upper division Communication elective courses. This shift in teaching focus has forced me to focus more on developing high level critical thinking skills. In doing so, I have worked to improve our students' writing, APA style skills, and application skills. In summary, my flexibility and willingness to teach across the breadth of our Communication Studies program has helped fulfill programmatic, divisional, and campus-level goals of retention and timely graduation for our students.

Classroom Approach

"Learning requires vulnerability. It involves self-disclosure and risk taking. High-quality connections also enable individuals and the collective to grow in unanticipated directions" –Jane E. Dutton

I consider my teaching style to be guided by two major tenets: active learning and collaborative learning. They are evidenced through my use of Bloom's Taxonomy in my lesson and curriculum design. I employ a wide variety of teaching and assessment methods with my ultimate goal being to fit the nature of the course content as well as the developmental needs of my students.

My classroom approach to teaching is based primarily on the idea of active learning. In order to most effectively learn, students must do more than just listen to an instructor's lecture, they should also engage in interaction, inquiry, and personal reflection (Bonwell & Eison, 1991; Cranton, 2012). I believe that my job as an instructor is not to pour out my knowledge to my students solely in the form of lectures, but rather to facilitate classroom discussion and activities guided by my knowledge to help students learn course material as well as apply it to their daily lives. I learned this approach early on in my career when students did not respond well to simply being lectured at – they did not read the course

material consistently and were not performing well on assessments. Therefore, I decided that I needed to involve my students more in the classroom and I moved to more of a hybrid approach to teaching. Rather than solely lecturing with class activities once in a while, I moved to a discussion format with regular interactive activities. Students responded very well and seemed to take much more ownership for their learning when they were expected to regularly participate. I found that this format also encouraged students to appropriately question the course material, their textbooks, and information I provided.

I find this approach to be particularly useful in my upper division elective classes. For instance, in my Gender and Communication course, students were asked to bring in current news articles about topics we were discussing in class. They would use these articles as the beginning of our class discussion about a given topic and they would often refer back to them in our discussions about relevant theories and course concepts. In my Introduction to Communication Theory course, I always start class by asking students to describe the theory we are discussing that day in class and then to have them ask any questions they had about the reading. At the end of class, we would revisit their questions to make sure they were addressed and they would summarize the theory in their own words before class would be dismissed. This encouraged students to take ownership for the material, but also for their understanding of the course material and how it related to their lives.

Further, there are several other ways I encourage students to take an active role in the learning process outside of class time. For instance, in my Intercultural Communication class, the students engage in a semester long project where they must participate in and learn about a culture they are not familiar with. They must read about this culture, interview people from this culture, observe cultural rituals, and engage in any other relevant research. Throughout the semester, they report back about their experiences in journal entries and short class presentations. Their projects culminate with a lengthy class presentation summarizing not only what they learned about their chosen culture, but also what they learned about themselves. Students have noted that this is one of the most rewarding projects they have engaged in in their college experience. Another way I encourage active learning is through the use of written case studies in both my Organizational Communication and Conflict and Communication classes. These written assignments have students apply the course material to a specific 'real-life' problem in an effort to propose solutions. This forces students to engage in higher order thinking in order to apply theory and/or research to situations they will likely encounter in their working lives. Through the use of these activities, I find that students are most motivated to be engaged with the course material both inside and outside of class.

I also believe that learning is a collaborative process, that both my students and I have something to learn from each other. Therefore, creating classroom environments where students are given a 'voice' to appropriately question the text, their peers, and the instructor is vitally important to me. I teach a variety of Communication Studies courses that involve potentially controversial topics, including issues related to sexuality and gender, cultural relativism, and culturally and religiously sensitive topics. In my experience, students have strong opinions related to these topics based on their previous life experiences and previous education. While South Central Indiana is generally politically conservative, some of my students have liberal views about these issues. While I do not share my personal opinions on these issues in the classroom, I work diligently to create a safe classroom environment where polarizing views can be shared, questioned, and discussed. I find that through these discussions, students learn the most not only about social issues, but about themselves and their classmates, as well as from each other.

This has been particularly relevant in two of my upper division classes: Intercultural Communication and Gender and Communication. In my Intercultural Communication class, I invited a community member to show a documentary about the history of the LGBT community in Columbus and to lead a discussion about gay rights. In this discussion, some students shared their religious views

related to homosexuality, some offered their honest disclosure that they had never considered the rights of gay people before, and some provided their opinions about human rights for all people. While my students approached the issue of gay rights from many different points of view, they all came together to not only voice their personal opinions, but to appropriately question those of their peers as well as our guest. In my Gender and Communication class, I invited Geena Rocero, a transgender model, who was speaking on campus, as a guest speaker for our class. Many of my students had never encountered a transgender person and were very nervous about asking her questions about her experiences growing up and going through the gender transition process. While I had my students prepare their questions in advance, we took time before Rocero came to our class to talk about their feelings and concerns in discussing the transgender lifestyle and issues transgender people face in their lives. Students were open and honest about their insecurities, but were also willing engage in this important discussion and experience. These two class periods remain the best experiences I have ever had in the classroom – it was truly a privilege to be a part of the open, honest, and genuine dialogue my students engaged in; these experiences were memorable for the students and for me as an instructor as well.

From these broad approaches to teaching, and in combination with Bloom's Taxonomy, I carefully consider how to present and assess course material. For instance, when students need to remember and understand a given topic, I use lectures, video examples, and in-class small group worksheets and discussions. It is through these activities I find that students not only come to grasp basic information easier, but are also most comfortable asking questions about topics they may not understand. The small group discussions and activities often provide a less intimidating environment for asking questions, rather than in front of the entire class. In terms of assessment for low-level learning, I often use reading check quizzes and/or quizzes over the material that are multiple choice, matching, and/or short answer questions asking for definitions of key course concepts we have discussed in class and that they have read about. I find that these assessment methods also reinforce their learning, in addition to assessing their learning.

When I want to students to engage in mid-level learning (i.e., applying, analyzing, and evaluating), I use in-class role-playing activities, case studies, written journals, written article critiques among other activities. One of my favorite ways of doing this when I teach about conflict styles (in any number of my classes) I have students randomly draw a conflict style and I give them a written situation. I give them a brief amount of time to consider how they would react with their given conflict style to the situation and then I have the students simulate what the conflict interaction would look like in 'real-life' if individuals with a variety of conflict styles were involved, whether it be in their families, friendships, romantic relationships, or at work. I find that when I use role-playing simulations in class, students are more engaged than they would be if I was simply lecturing and providing my own examples. In terms of assessment for mid-level learning, I often use a variety of written assignments, including case studies, journal entries applying course concepts to their everyday lives, and short answer application questions on quizzes and exams.

When I want students to engage in high-level learning (i.e., synthesizing and creating), I use major research papers and research proposals. I use research papers in most of the classes I teach, where students are required to pick the course topic they are most interested in learning more about. I have them write a paper where they are required to analyze the current scholarly research about their topic and provide suggestions for future research about the topic. In my Research Methods class, students are required to write a research proposal. In this paper, they are required to summarize the research about a given topic, develop a hypothesis, and then suggest the research methods for the effectively performing the study. In both of these paper assignments, students are asked to read and critique research articles, find the gaps in the current research, and (in the case of the research proposal) develop a research study that would address their identified gaps in the research. These types

of assignments require a great deal of time and effort behalf of both me and the student. Generally, with high-level learning, their final papers and research proposals serve as the primary means of assessment.

Course Evaluations

In an effort to understand my strengths and areas for improvement as a teacher, I sought peer reviews from colleagues. Because there are no tenured faculty members in Communication Studies, I have asked my division heads, Andrae Marak and George Towers, to review my teaching regardless of their disciplines. Kristina Horn Sheeler, Communication Studies department head at IUPUI, also kindly agreed to come to Columbus to review my teaching. Faculty from other disciplines were asked to review my teaching as well. Highlights from my five peer-reviews are in the eDossier, but the full reviews are available as an Appendix of the dossier. Although all five of my peer reviews are from different classes, I believe they clearly demonstrate my strengths as an instructor: command of course material, classroom management skills, student rapport, and a use of a wide range of teaching techniques.

Evidence of Quality Teaching as Evaluated by Students

"It is literally true that you can succeed best and quickest by helping others to succeed." -Napoleon Hill

To me, it is necessary to base my teaching on the feedback that I receive from my students. I use this feedback to shape my lesson plans, lectures, in-class activities, and forms of assessment. I have used three different forms of feedback from my students to shape my teaching and my lesson plans: university course evaluations and comments from those evaluations, formative assessment I conduct during each semester, as well as notes and emails from students.

First, my teaching evaluations are generally above average. The most common complaints that I got early in my career were that my grading was harsh, my expectations for assignments were not clear, and that students did not always feel prepared for their exams. I have worked diligently to address each of these concerns. While most students think teachers grade harshly, I have worked to explain my grading processes to my students, specifically what I am looking for in each assignment. I often give the students examples of “C” level work, as well as examples of “A” level work. I have also developed detailed assignment sheets for each major assignment in my courses – this gives students a tangible document to take with them when working on their assignments. The combination of these two strategies has helped decrease the number of comments about harsh grading and unclear expectations a great deal. Finally, I have also developed review sheets, review activities, and study sessions outside of normal class time to address students’ concerns with not being clear about what is covered on my exams. While my exams generally follow a short-answer and essay format, the study guide provides

Second, I have also received emails and notes from my students about my impact on their lives as their instructor. I have provided two examples of the most descriptive (beyond just complementary) emails in the Appendix.

Evidence of Effective Teaching through Scholarly Dissemination of Knowledge

Passion for quality instruction has led me to engage in the scholarship of teaching. I presented two G.I.F.T.S. (Great Ideas for Teaching Speech) in 2012 and 2013 at the annual Central States Communication Association conferences. The first was the Jumbled Story Impromptu Speech activity I developed to help my students in introductory Public Speaking feel more comfortable giving impromptu presentations in class. The second was an Article Review and Presentation I developed to help my upper level students feel more comfortable reading, analyzing, and presenting about academic research articles. I tend to use this assignment in my content classes (i.e., Family Communication and Organizational Communication) to provide supplementary material to what we are reading in the course

textbooks. Both of these activities were presented in roundtable discussions to interested instructors from across the Midwestern United States – allowing me to share teaching activities that have helped my students master course content.

I was also invited to present at the IUPUI Educational Training for Teaching Associates (ETTA) and at the IUPUC Professional Development Mini-Conference in August of 2014. In both of these cases, I presented information from my online teaching experiences over the course of my Curriculum Enhancement Grant, which permitted me to develop the first online course in Communication Studies at IUPUC. At IUPUI, I presented best practices in using Oncourse and talked about how to use this learning platform differently and perhaps more effectively, whether the teaching associates were teaching face-to-face or online classes. At IUPUC, I presented about best practices in online teaching using Oncourse. In this presentation, I was able to share with my colleagues what worked and what did not work for me in developing an online class and how they could use this information to develop online courses in their disciplines.

Evidence of Effective Teaching through Mentoring Relationships

Prior to 2014, IUPUC did not employ a divisional academic advisor; therefore, I was responsible for advising 20-35 Communication Studies majors from 2010-2014. While I no longer serve in the formal role as academic advisor now, I continue to provide career advice, graduate school advising, and life coaching to my former advisees.

Often what is most rewarding for me, is mentoring students through research projects. In the each of the last four years, my students have earned an IUPUC Office of Student Research grant to conduct and present their research. I take an active learning approach to mentoring student research, which mirrors my overall approach to teaching. This process begins when I see the potential for a student to further explore a given topic, when a student expresses interest in an under-researched topic, or when a student expresses a desire to actively engage in the research process. Many of my mentees do not have experience gathering and analyzing data, but have expressed an interest in the process after reading research articles for classes they have taken. Throughout the research mentorship process, I have had to reassure my students of their writing abilities, their statistical and data analytical abilities, and their critical thinking abilities. This requires meeting with my mentees frequently to review articles together, discuss outlining and formatting of academic articles, work through the data analysis process together, and brainstorm the applicability of their results to the world outside of academia. I find that my students constantly want to learn more about the research process and are eager for the challenges presented to them in this process. My students' topics may tangentially be related to my personal research interests, but their ideas are uniquely theirs. My students take great ownership of their projects and it has been tremendously rewarding to see them beam when they present their research at academic conferences.

I have mentored several undergraduate students. My eDossier provides a description of my mentees, their project titles, methods of dissemination, any funding or awards they earned as a result, educational outcomes, and dates of mentorship.

Concluding Remarks

In this document, I have presented evidence that my teaching activities have met or exceeded the requirements for being satisfactory in teaching. I have used my teaching to contribute to IUPUC's mission and goals by teaching to the PULs and to students' needs. I have explained how my classroom approach blends active and collaborative learning is applied through the use of Bloom's Taxonomy when designing courses. Further, I have disseminated my teaching strategies through both conference presentations as well as invited talks. I have demonstrated evidence of peer and student evaluations illustrating that I am an effective instructor. Finally, I have a strong record of successful undergraduate

student research mentorship, all of which received funding and were presented at academic conferences. Based on my strong teaching record, I was nominated for IUPUC's full-time faculty Teaching Award in 2015.