

Final Reflection

Eight years ago when I first started teaching, my goal was to update the then current curriculum for CAD training. Everything from ordering supplies to preparing lesson plans was a new experience for me. Teaching was not as challenging as it was to try and get the proper resources secured. But once I learned to negotiate the bureaucracy, my attention turned to improving the student learning process. At first I felt I needed new equipment, make changes to the curriculum, and try new teaching strategies. I stumbled around for a couple of years, learning from a very narrow perspective what was or not working for my classes. My vision was in need of direction and structure. That's when I turned to the Master's program at CSUN. I did investigate other schools, but I already was aware of CSUN's excellent reputation for producing competent and visionary teachers.

During the last two years of my teaching I have seen dramatic improvements in student learning. Throughout this time, I have revised district-wide curricula, developed a course website with multimedia instructional aids, and integrated project-based learning for green technologies in Engineering and sustainable design in Architecture. I have seen a different level of engagement, of learning, of assemblages of new ideas from a variety of students. I attribute

part of this success to the education I received from CSUN and the skills I command as a result of completing the Educational Technology Master's program.

Upon commencing the program, I understood that the focus would be on technology and so I expected to be developing tools and learning about ways to integrate technology effectively into my curriculum. I was pleasantly surprised that courses like SED 600 included a review of pedagogical approaches to teaching along with past and current literature. I found it helpful to prepare for the final development project throughout some of the courses. This put me at ease by knowing what to expect and therefore know what I needed to focus my attention on.

Most rewarding to me was the fact the program was conducted as a cohort, and required regular in-class meetings and working with each other on more than one project. This provided a great deal of opportunities for dialogue and exchange of ideas amongst the variety of professionals I encountered. I feel this was one of the most impacting experiences, because throughout the program I could view education as a student and as a collaborator with other students. This carried over to my classroom as an instructor as I applied pedagogical theory and appropriate use of technology in the revision of course curricula and instructional materials for my students. With a better understanding

of the variety of learning modalities and technological aids to improve understanding, I was enabled to develop projects and a learning environment that fostered collaboration among my students. Very often, designers must work with a variety of disciplines and learn to coordinate information into one coherent set of documents. By working together, basic concepts are reinforced and more complex ideas are formed through exchange.

My whole experience of the master's program was positive and I would recommend it to others interested in pursuing a Master's degree in education. I only was disappointed with two items and can think of possibly two suggestions. By changing the final submittal guidelines and rubric, I felt a critical part of my educational contract with CSUN was broken. Throughout most of the two years, I was under one impression of what to expect, and then that was turned totally upside down first with a revision of the development project submission guidelines, then the Portfolio submission guidelines and rubric. Not only was the timing (weeks before graduation) inappropriate, but it created a whole other level of stress. Notwithstanding, I remained completely committed to producing the best possible work and simply forge ahead to do so. I recommend for future cohorts, to make revisions prior to commencing the programming and notifying students of the changes. I also recommend that for the development project, that the guidelines be revised. As currently required, it seems the students that

produce a development project do twice as much work by also being required to produce a research paper. Perhaps students could submit some kind of writing sample early on to compliment the work performed to produce a development project.

While I was disappointed that I was not offered the networking class, I also feel that maybe one or more classes could have been conducted online. I would have liked to learn about setting up a server and deploying an educational website, as well as use the latest technologies for distance learning. Nonetheless, I feel I gained so many valuable skills and ideas by attending the educational technology program at CSUN. The instructors were knowledgeable, approachable, and offered a great deal of useful information. Each brought their experience and skill to class in a unique way, illuminating the path to the future of education.

Now on the eve of my impending graduation, I feel I have reached a summit and can look out onto a broad horizon. Just in the last few months, I have started to engage the process of revising my course curricula again and am in the process of securing a large grant for my class. During my time in the Master's program, I completed a revision of my class website to make it more accessible and provide a richer learning environment. As some previous goals now come to fruition, I look forward to new ones. In the near future I hope to

develop my professional experience by seeking LEEDS certification in sustainable design and obtaining my Landscape Architecture license. In the mean time, I hope to continue to provide exceptional CAD instruction to my students, and spend some quality time with my family. Without their support, I would not have been able to succeed nor aspire to such great heights.