

The Development of Faculty in Dental Education

As a seasoned educator, I still pause when I'm about to give a lecture. I remember to breathe, to "take in" the students in front of me. I know my PowerPoint is up-to-date, with sub-heads, bullets, and graphics I've spent hours updating over the years, and as I begin, I'm hoping I can hold the attention of my students.

In these situations and as I write this editorial, I reflect back on the characteristics of teachers who have captivated me, made me want to learn, translated complex materials into understandable terms, made me think. I remember the amazingly colored, three-dimensional chalk drawing of the nerves and vessels on the board. The way certain phrases were repeated that made them stick in my mind. Offering to meet with students to review materials. Sharing a personal story that resonated. Calling on me in a way that challenged me.

In an article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Rob Jenkins sought to answer the question "what makes teachers great?" by defining four qualities of powerful teachers: personality, presence, preparation, and passion.¹ Personality traits of these teachers include being good-natured and approachable, professional, funny, demanding without being unkind, comfortable in their own skin, natural, willing to try new things. In the area of presence, he describes teachers who "own" the room. I remember teachers who had me on the edge of my seat, watching, wanting to emulate their characteristics. Not all instructors have natural charisma, but Jenkins emphasizes that with a certain amount of self-awareness, concentration, and determination we can all learn how to captivate our audiences.

In discussing preparation, Jenkins urges educators to think about long-, medium-, and short-term goals. What strikes me in this section is how similar this process is to the scholarship of teaching and learning. Jenkins challenges us to be educators who are "reading extensively in your field, attending conferences and seminars, conducting and presenting your own research, and remaining a practitioner of your art or science. You must also continue to learn

and grow as a teacher by exploring new advances in pedagogy and technology that can help you in the classroom." As Jenkins explains, growing as a teacher "means more than just reviewing your notes or PowerPoint slides before a lecture. It involves constantly reassessing what you do in the classroom, abandoning strategies that haven't proved effective or are just outdated, and trying new ones."

Finally, there is passion. Of all the qualities that characterize great teachers, Jenkins says this is most important. Passion, he says, "manifests itself in the classroom in two ways: love for students and love for your subject matter." Dental educators may find the second form of love comes naturally, but what about the first? Jenkins describes being amazed at how many of his colleagues "don't seem to like students very much. These faculty members are the ones who buttonhole you in the hallway to complain about how irresponsible and disrespectful their students are; who take delight in pointing out students' deficiencies or regale you with examples of (supposedly) stupid things they've said or done; who are always tsk-tsking about 'kids today.'" If we encounter teachers like this in dental education, we might share Jenkins's frustration: "I sometimes want to say," he writes, "'If you dislike students so much, why are you in this business? Why in the world would you want to spend so much of your time with a bunch of people you find so disagreeable?'"

Perhaps some of these negative attitudes arise from the fact that many if not most dental faculty members are thrust into teaching without any formal training. Although experts in their subject matter, suddenly they encounter the unfamiliar requirements of calibration, formative and summative assessments, public speaking, use of technology, case-based and problem-based learning, the flipped classroom, portfolios, and so on. Many dental schools provide on-site faculty development as well as university-based programs that meet faculty needs at the local level. Other faculty members benefit from national programs such as those offered by the American Dental Education Association (ADEA) and the Academy for

Academic Leadership (AAL). Faculty development is not merely for new teachers but should be part of dental educators' lifelong learning. We all need to be mentored, coached, inspired, and supported as educational methods evolve and as our goals and aspirations change throughout our careers.

For those of us in charge of faculty development, many additional questions and challenges arise. How do we structure programs to meet the diversity of needs with the resources we have? Are our faculty development programs having a measurable impact on our teaching and learning programs? How do we measure faculty performance when so much is based on student evaluations/observations? How do we provide mentorship and guidance to faculty as chairs and administrators?

In their article in this issue, Gadbury-Amyot et al. review the recent history of faculty development in dental education and present results of an evalu-

ation of their school's program.² This systematic, mixed-methods study provides outcomes assessment that should be useful for other dental schools and allied and advanced dental programs. As these authors point out, additional systematic studies are needed to generate data that will guide faculty development efforts. Such research—which we'd like to see more of in the *Journal of Dental Education*—can ultimately help all of us who are dental faculty members become the kind of teachers who make a difference for our students.

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REFERENCES

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2. Gadbury-Amyot CC, Smith DB, Overman PR, Bunce L. Faculty development at one midwestern dental school: a program evaluation. *J Dent Educ* 2015;79(10):1177-88.