

Bowie State – August Faculty Institute, 2015

Topic: Kathleen Gabriel's *Teaching Unprepared Students*

Presenter: Dr. John Shook

Chapter 2: Philosophical Foundations

Chapter 5: Learning Styles and the Style of Learning

This presentation introduces faculty to some guidelines about educating underprepared learners and student learning styles which have had proven worth for guiding students towards academic success.

Gabriel: *"The purpose of this book is to provide professors with teaching strategies and methods that will promote student engagement and improve performance for all the students in their classes, but especially for those who are at risk or unprepared, without sacrificing high standards or expectations."* (p. 5)

Philosophical Principles about Learning:

- I. All students can become lifelong learners and can be successful
- II. Change requires commitment and time on the part of faculty and students
- III. Struggle is necessary
- IV. Students must accept responsibility for their learning progress and be held accountable
- V. Never do for students what they should do for themselves – show them how to be self-reliant

Practical Issues. Ask yourself these questions:

- A. What behaviors or abilities make the biggest difference between student success and student failure?
- B. What are the educational gaps new students are most likely to bring with them?
- C. Why do students sense a disconnection between what they are learning in a class and their current / future life as they envision it?
- D. Could your students respond to the question, "How does this really matter?" after covering a week's worth of content?
- E. Might students have a few opportunities to participate in shaping or making some decisions about how assignments can be successfully completed?

Learning Styles. Working with students' learning styles helps them acquire more responsibility for their own learning. Use learning styles inventories to get started – and have students take them too!

- Gabriel endorses Felder & Solomon's questionnaire at www.engr.ncsu.edu/learningstyles/ilsweb.html
 - What type of information does the student preferentially perceive?
 - a. **Sensing learners** - concrete, practical, oriented toward facts and procedures
 - b. **Intuitive learners** - conceptual, innovative, oriented toward theories and meanings
 - Through what sensory modality is sensory information most effectively perceived?
 - c. **Visual learners** - prefer visual representations of presented material (pictures, diagrams, charts)
 - d. **Verbal learners** - prefer written and spoken explanations
 - How does the student prefer to process information?
 - e. **Active learners** - learn by trying things out, working with others
 - f. **Reflective learners** - learn by thinking things through, working alone
 - How does the student progress toward understandings?
 - g. **Sequential learners** - linear, orderly, learn in small incremental steps
 - h. **Global learners** - holistic, system thinkers, learn in large leaps

Good practices in Undergraduate Education:

1. Encourage contacts between students and faculty.
2. Develop reciprocity and cooperation among students.
3. Use active learning techniques.
4. Give prompt feedback.
5. Emphasize time on task.
6. Communicate high expectations.
7. Respect diverse talents and ways of learning.
8. Promote deep learning – as opposed to surface learning, memorization, & repetition.
9. Create concept maps or outlines to show relationships.
10. Organize new information into meaningful patterns, connecting new information to prior knowledge.

More Resources:

Adelman, C. *The Toolbox Revisited*. 2006. www2.ed.gov/rschstat/research/pubs/toolboxrevisit/index.html

Alford, Kenneth L., and Griffin, Tyler J. "Teaching Unprepared Students: The Importance of Increasing Relevance." *Faculty Focus*. 4 Nov. 2013. <http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/effective-teaching-strategies/teaching-unprepared-students-the-importance-of-increasing-relevance/>

College-readiness Checklist from the AAUP publication *Academe* (Jan.-Feb. 2009)

<http://www.aaup.org/NR/rdonlyres/F83CC555-C601-4A7E-8854-7E847328E922/0/SullivanChecklist.pdf>

ACTIVITY WITH A COLLEAGUE

Select an introductory level class that you are soon teaching, or recently taught. Think about one of those early weeks of the semester, and a topic to be covered on one of those days. Enjoy a thought experiment: how might you instruct your students, and assess their learning, a little differently? Share your thoughts with a colleague who isn't in your discipline, to get feedback from an "underprepared" learner regarding your area of expertise.

How can I make my instruction and assessment as productive as possible for my underprepared learners? <u>CONCERNS:</u>	<u>NEW PLAN:</u>
Practical Issues (A–E) that I can keep in mind:	
Learning Styles (a–h) that instruction can respect:	
Good Practices (1–10) that can be fulfilled:	
Philosophical Principles (I–V) guiding a reevaluation of teaching:	

Bulldog Boot Camp: Preparing Underprepared Students for College

One of Bowie State University's many challenges is improving its six-year graduation rate. In recent years, it has fluctuated between thirty three percent (33%) and forty two percent (42%).¹ Or, to put it another way, significantly less than half of the first time first year students who begin their collegiate studies at Bowie State graduate within six years. Bowie State's six-year graduation rate falls significantly below the national average of fifty nine percent (59%) and the national average for public institutions of fifty eight percent (58%).² These statistics clearly indicate that the majority of students who begin their academic careers at Bowie State are underprepared for college-level studies.

There is a substantial literature on underprepared students in college.³ One of the fundamental problems with these studies is that they presume that underprepared students are exceptions to the norm of students who are prepared for college-level studies. Accordingly, they present models of support services (e.g., writing center, tutoring services, etc.) designed to help students who comprise a relatively small portion of the student body. They do not account for the possibility—and in Bowie State University's case, the reality—that the overwhelming majority of an institution's students are underprepared for college.

Accordingly, we propose a learner-centered curriculum that will account for and address students' lack of preparation on a large-scale and significantly improve Bowie State University's six-year graduation rate. Rather than addressing student deficiencies piecemeal via programs such as the Bulldog Academy, the Writing Center, and the Tutoring and Supplemental Instruction Program, the Bulldog Boot Camp proposes an intensive, year long, comprehensive, and integrated curriculum designed to remediate students and prepare them for a four-year course of studies and graduation within five years.

Students will be placed in intensive (four credit hour) courses designed to remediate their skills in academic reading, writing, math and sciences to the collegiate level. Study skills currently taught in the Freshman Seminar (FRSE 101) will be incorporated into the curriculum. Students will take four four-credit courses (16 credit hours) per semester. The four credit courses provided in two two-hour blocks per week will be necessary for the learner-centered pedagogies.

The Bulldog Boot Camp will be the default norm for admissions to Bowie State University. Students who demonstrate proficient skills to complete college level studies will be placed as freshmen.

Further, the Bulldog Boot Camp program proposes revising the General Education and Institutional requirements and the upper division curriculum to make the four-credit hour course the norm for coursework at Bowie State University. This would allow for the implementation of learning-centered pedagogies as the standard modes of instruction, and given the labor-intensive nature of these instructional methods, and require faculty to teach three courses per semester. Significantly, teaching three four-credit courses will comply with Section II-1.25-2 of the University System of Maryland Policy on Faculty Workload and Responsibilities.⁴ Although

¹ President Mickey L. Burnim, Address to Faculty, August 26, 2015.

² National Center for Education Statistics, <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=40>. Accessed August 26, 2015.

³ See, for example, Kathleen F. Gabriel, *Teaching Unprepared Students: Strategies for Promoting Success and Retention in Higher Education*, (Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, 2008).

⁴ <http://www.usmd.edu/regents/bylaws/SectionII/II125.html>.

requiring students to take four four-credit courses will result in increasing the required number of credits for graduation from 120 to 128, it will reduce the total number of required courses from 40 to 32.

Proposed Bulldog Boot Camp Curriculum

English Composition:	8 credits (Fall & Spring)
College Reading:	8 credits (Fall & Spring)
First Year/(Pre-)Freshman Seminar:	8 credits (Fall & Spring)
Math:	4 credits (Fall)
Science:	4 credits (Spring)

Current General Education & Institutional Requirements

- One course in each of two disciplines in humanities (six semester hours)
- One course in each of two disciplines in social and behavioral sciences (six semester hours)
--Including mandatory 3 credits of African American History
- Two science courses (seven to eight semester hours)
- One course in mathematics at or above the level of college algebra (three semester hours)
- Two courses in English composition (six semester hours)
- One course in technology (three semester hours)
- Three free electives (9 credits)
- One course in Health and Wellness (three semester hours)
- Freshman Seminar (three semester hours)
- Total: 46-47 credits

Proposed Revised Curriculum

General Education Requirements 128 credits/16 credits per semester (4 years)/32 courses

Humanities	8
African American History	4
English Composition	4
African American Literature	4
Social/Behavioral Science	8
Natural Science	8
Math	4
Technology	4
Health & Wellness	4
Total:	48 credits

Major:	40 credits
<u>Electives:</u>	40 credits
Total:	128 credits/32 classes