

Although over 30 years of experience in higher education have shaped my thinking about teaching and learning, my philosophy has always focused on student success and ways to facilitate students' learning and life goals. As a former educator of developmental students, I have developed substantial understanding of the needs of students who have different learning styles and need additional—and different—learning opportunities/supports in order to achieve academic success. Providing students with new cognitive strategies and helping them change their thinking about themselves empowers them to do what is needed to succeed. Thus, I see learning as a thinking process rather than a product to be achieved. I see my role as an educator as helping students develop and refine their thinking skills so that they can approach and learn any subject they choose with skill and confidence. I believe this view parallels that of the concept of the learning college at Valencia.

I believe a learning-centered college is one that provides students with the knowledge, skills, strategies, and personnel that empower them to achieve the academic requirements needed to achieve their personal goals. This means that the college meets students at their individual starting points and utilizes each student's personal interests, learning styles, and current abilities as well as all of the academic and student services resources available within the institution to help that individual attain academically rigorous levels of achievement in accordance with college, state, and industry standards and benchmarks. This occurs by providing students with academic and advising scaffolding that results in the formation of true learning communities. Learning communities, formed through intentional efforts to connect students and academic coursework, allow faculty, staff, and other students to contribute to the development of the individual learner as well as to the learning community as a whole.

Several key people and ideas continue to shape my teaching philosophy. First, about twenty years ago, I attended a week long critical thinking "Train the Trainer" seminar led by Dr. Richard Paul at the Center for Critical Thinking at Sonoma State University. As a result, I began changing my teaching from a lecture, instructor-centered approach to an active-learning, student-centered approach. Second, an article by Robert B. Barr and John Tagg (*Change*, November/December 1995, pp. 13-25) titled "From Teaching to Learning—A New Paradigm for Undergraduate Education" provided concrete details about what student-centered instruction could be in terms of theory (e.g., constructivist), structure (e.g., not limited by time or space), criteria for success (e.g., outcomes based), and faculty roles (e.g., guides). Third, I've been fortunate to know and work with colleagues across the US whose ideas and assistance impacted my thinking and teaching in terms of contextual, cooperative, service, and other forms of learning. Fourth, the growth of technology and increasing explosion of information makes the need to help students become self-directed learners and critical thinkers even more imperative because I am preparing students to solve problems and hold jobs of the future, not just jobs of the present. Fifth, changes in students themselves (e.g., millennial learners and nontraditional students) alter the learning environment (e.g., new avenues for delivery of instruction) and the teaching approaches I use. Sixth, I directed a summer experience for Upward Bound students at Florida Southern College and met a wonderful business professor there: Dr. Craig Bythewood who said, "If you know what you are doing, you'll always have a job. . . if you know why you are doing it, you'll always be in charge." I thought that statement had a lot of application to helping students be "in charge" of themselves and their futures; therefore, I try to provide a lot of the "whys" behind what I do. Last, I try to remember that each student is someone's child, parent, relative, or friend and treat them as I would want someone to teach my child, parent, relative or friend. What I say or do can make a difference in that person's life whether I know it or not.