

Question 5:

How does your scholarship inform your teaching, and vice versa?

“Research topics often emerge from problems encountered in teaching--explanations that do not make sense, paradoxes I cannot resolve, and so on. Research projects are sharpened by considering how the results affect what or how I teach. Needs to cover broad topics in teaching have motivated research to fill holes in my knowledge. And teaching is improved by asking periodically whether research continues to support conclusions that make sense pedagogically.”

David Zarefsky, Northwestern University
2012 Wallace A. Bacon Lifetime Teaching Excellence Award

“The reason we are in front of the room teaching is that we supposedly know more about the material than the student. And what we know is drawn (I hope) from scholarship. For me, every time I read an article I imagine how I could use that piece in the classroom. You’ll find me turning relevant articles into PowerPoint slides for a class. I also try to translate complex academic concepts into terms and experiences students can identify with. For example, in my large interpersonal class I turn academic jargon into more familiar terms (e.g., rather than talking about person perception I talk about charisma; instead of talking about serial communication, I lecture about rumors and gossip; when I cover the acquaintance process I talk about it as how people meet and “pick” each other at parties and bars). For me, personally, every time I conduct a piece of research it makes me a better teacher. In the process of conducting and writing up a study I learn so much about topics both familiar and unfamiliar to me. By the way, the reverse is also true. The best students ask me questions each semester that I don’t have a good answer to. Thus the opportunity for a research project (sometimes with them).”

John A. Daly, University of Texas
2002 Donald H. Ecroyd Award for Outstanding Teaching in Higher Education

“My scholarship and teaching are intimately intertwined, as I believe they inform and complement each other. In recent years, I have had the joy of teaching sections of our undergraduate research methods course. With enrollment sizes ranging from 50 to nearly 70 students, I transformed my sections into large research teams. Throughout the semester, my students earned their IRB certificates, collected and analyzed survey and interview data for an IRB-approved class research project on the communication of social biases (which is related to my larger research program on discrimination and coping), and developed preliminary research reports. Students enjoyed the course project, because they got to conduct field research and apply class concepts beyond the classroom. Some of my students subsequently joined my research team where they coauthored papers, pursued grant funding, and presented projects at academic conferences. By developing a synergistic and symbiotic relationship between teaching and research, my students gain valuable hands-on experiences as communication

scholars and I get the unique opportunity to support their learning while advancing my research program.

In addition to teaching students about the research process and producing new knowledge, I draw from my scholarship on discrimination and coping to enhance my teaching. For example, my research team and I recently completed a series of studies on anti-hate social media activism. Drawing from the findings of our research projects, I developed a workshop that taught my undergraduate students some best practices for engaging in anti-hate social media activism.”

Lisa K. Hanasono, Bowling Green State University
2015 CSCA Outstanding New Teacher Award

“I’ve always believed that teaching and scholarship are deeply intertwined. How could we teach responsibly without deep knowledge of research related to what we teach? And how could we attend to our students’ comments and questions and not generate new research questions?

For me, the relationships between the two foci of academic life became particularly evident in dealing with the particular issue of intimate partner violence. For many years, I taught a unit on intimate partner violence in both my interpersonal communication and gender communication classes. To prepare, I familiarized myself with the research and state and local statistics on rape, assault, and other forms of violence between intimates. Over time, I began to notice that students were responding with greater attention to this unit. In addition, more students were stopping by my office to discuss either personal experiences or those of “a friend.”

When the extent of my students’ familiarity with intimate partner violence became clear to me, I decided I needed first-hand understanding of the dynamics of this phenomenon. In other words, my teaching led me to a research program. I conducted two primary studies: One with women who had been victims of intimate partner violence and a second with men who had assaulted or, in some cases, killed intimates. These two studies gave me a visceral understanding of the perspectives of both victims and perpetrators. What I learned from my research as well as all of the related research I reviewed to design my studies led to more informed and passionate teaching of the topic. In other words, my research enriched my teaching.”

Julia Wood, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
2006 Donald H. Ecroyd Award for Outstanding Teaching in Higher Education

“I like to teach around areas I research, and discussions about these topics, in turn, inform my scholarship. As one recent example, I teach both undergraduate- and graduate-level courses on social media and interpersonal relationships. One theory I always teach, and frequently use in my research, is media multiplexity theory. After taking the graduate course, one particularly bright student decided to write her comprehensive exams about the theory. Her answer was so incisive that it

fundamentally shifted how I think about the theory, and I am now considering how to evaluate that conceptual shift in future research. In other cases, students have moved on from my undergraduate communication theory class to study those theories in graduate school, invoking theories such as expectancy violations theory, cultivation theory, and face-negotiation theory in their research. For me, both research and teaching are about the discovery of truth and the communication of it, and therefore I find that research deepens my teaching, and teaching both sharpens my thinking and leads to new research questions.”

Andrew M. Ledbetter, Texas Christian University
2011 CSCA Outstanding New Teacher Award

“Years ago, I read Donald Schön’s (1983) *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. I felt there had never been a book that had spoken to me more about communication and about education. I knew at that point, Schön’s work on reflection-on-action and reflecting-in-action would become the centerpiece for my dissertation, future research and that it would inform how I teach. For my dissertation, I examined the connection between reflection ‘in’ and ‘on’ action and the communication competence of pre-service teachers. In terms of research, shortly after I received my Ph.D., I began to include service-learning in my courses. This pedagogy stresses the importance of reflection in service-learning and so this became a research focus for me. On a practical level, however, I use reflection in my classroom all the time. For example, in my public speaking course, after students present a speech, they write a reflective response. I ask them to reflect on their preparation and presentation and to analyze what they liked, didn’t like, what they would have changed and what they believe they should work on for the next time. I tell them if they learn to reflect on their presentations, then long after the course is over and someone is completing a grade sheet on them, they will always continue to improve as public speakers. In addition, I ask them to reflect-in-action while they are presenting. If they can listen to themselves while presenting, they should know if they need to slow down or speak louder or re-explain something (based on the nonverbal feedback they are receiving from their peers). I believe if I can get them to reflect ‘in’ and ‘on’ their presentations, it will help them improve. This of course, can be applied to any assignment in any type of course. In addition, I use reflection myself. There is not a class or a day that goes by that I don’t try to reflect on what I taught, how I taught and how I could improve. Overall, reading Schön’s 1983 book (and his subsequent work) has had a significant impact on my teaching.”

Sara Chudnovsky Weintraub, Regis College
2014 ECA Donald H. Ecroyd & Caroline Drummond Ecroyd Teaching Excellence Award

“The integration of teaching and research will vary with the subject being taught. When I was writing public speaking textbooks, for example, teaching a course in public speaking was a major resource for what I was considering adding to the textbook. I could try out materials in class as well as new ways of addressing ‘how to’ issues and adapt results in writing a chapter. In teaching graduate classes, the integration also is much stronger, as you can introduce work you are doing at the moment (especially if

the course and work align!) and get feedback from students. You also learn more from your students than you might imagine or anticipate. I have found new ways to address problematic issues in my own work from conversations in the classroom--at both undergraduate and graduate levels. Undergraduate and graduate papers are another resource with great potential to add new insights or consider questions from a different direction. This integration, by the way, is only possible when one is open to learning from students--that may seem an unnecessary caution, but as one with five decades of experience, it is a critical first step in permitting integration."

Raymie E. McKerrow (Emeritus), Ohio University
2017 Wallace A. Bacon Lifetime Teaching Excellent Award

"We often talk about how our scholarship informs our teaching; it's important also to acknowledge the ways in which our teaching can inform our scholarship. I teach classes such as Rhetorical Criticism, Political Communication, and American Speeches. One of the reasons I love teaching these classes is that they provide an opportunity to explore how these topics are relevant to our lived experiences. Exploring this question in class inspires me in my research and often generates research questions. In American Speeches, we examine why so many debates recur in American discourse and how they change—and do not change--across history. This has influenced my research on states' rights arguments in the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries. In Political Communication, we explore how political rhetors try to negotiate their images with the electorate. This has helped me frame my scholarship on female politicians who must negotiate their femininity as part of their public persona as well as male politicians who must negotiate their masculinity. What expectations are political actors trying to address as they interpret and perform these questions of identity, and how successful are their strategies? Exploring these issues in the classes I teach gives me the opportunity to question assumptions, arguments, connections, and disruptions that I can then bring to my scholarship."

Ann E. Burnette, Texas State University
2016 SSCA John I. Sisco Excellence in Teaching Award

"I worry that many of our students—and certainly the general public—do not recognize the value of research, especially the value of the social sciences and humanities. That is a detriment to our field and to the supporting of public universities. To address this, one tactic I take is to make sure that I answer questions students have by referring, sometimes in great detail, to research that has been done by scholars in the discipline. Sometimes I happen to know a study that I can share with them off the top of my head, but more likely it involves bringing a study to the next class period, re-introducing the idea or question discussed in the previous class, and then showing them what a communication scholar did to address the question. I then like to challenge students to think about whether or not they believe/agree with the findings of the research and why. A lot of the times it helps them to think through communication ideas on a deeper level,

recognize that communication is not always common sense, and, as a bonus, it lets them see that the work professors are doing can be relevant and highly important to their lives.

I am also a big fan of working research projects into classes when I can. It is time consuming, and sometimes the projects simply do not turn out well – but students start to get a sense of how knowledge is created and engage the ideas on a deeper level. They also get a sense that communication research and theorizing are hard and take careful consideration – a lesson that is always welcome in a discipline that some consider to be the easy one in the academy."

Jimmie Manning

Professor and Chair, Communication Studies

University of Nevada, Reno

2020 Donald H. Ecroyd Award for Outstanding Teaching in Higher Education