

The Pennsylvania State University
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Department of Agricultural and Extension Education

**A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF TEACHING PHILOSOPHY STATEMENTS OF
AWARD WINNING COLLEGES OF AGRICULTURE PROFESSORS**

A Thesis in
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by

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ABSTRACT

As our economy calls for improved employment skills, educational institutions must provide quality teaching to prepare students for success. A series of studies have confirmed that access to an effective teacher is the single most important school related factor responsible for increased learning. Researchers purport that an important factor in determining student learning is the teacher, and that one of the most prominent factors in student achievement is teacher quality. The search for the attributes, dispositions, knowledge, and instructional skills that define effective teachers continues as scholars seek to discover the teacher variables that lead to student achievement. The purpose of the descriptive research was to identify themes present in the teaching philosophy statements of the United States Department of Agriculture Excellence in College and University Teaching in the Food and Agricultural Sciences award recipients. Content analysis technique was utilized in reviewing the provided espoused philosophy statements of award winners from 2000 – 2010. Findings include identification of eleven emergent themes. Future recommendations would be a descriptive research study determining if a disconnect exists between the stated teaching philosophy of award winning professors and their actual teaching practice. Further application would be to analyze the classroom practice of award winning professors and the impact had on student learning.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Teaching is creative, fast-paced and ever changing (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Teachers have the unique ability to promote opportunity for all students and make a lasting impact now and in the future, creating the leaders of tomorrow and sparking a lifelong passion for learning (USDE, 2010). An educator must work hard to design quality instruction, make informed decisions, and create operational learning activities to provide an effective learning experience to students (Titus & Gremler, 2010).

Excellent teaching is even more difficult to define and the actual practice of excellent teaching involves more planning and preparation. The Pennsylvania State University Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence (2010) defines excellent teaching as:

an academic process by which students are motivated to learn in ways that make a sustained, substantial, and positive influence on how they think, act, and feel; a process that elevates students to a level where they learn deeply and remarkably because of teacher attributes. (Pennsylvania State University Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence, 2010, para.2)

Today, a higher education is not just a pathway to opportunity – it is a prerequisite. Over the next decade, nearly eight in ten new job openings in the U.S. will require some workforce training or postsecondary education, and of the thirty fastest growing

occupations in America, half require at least a 4-year college degree. Rising levels of education are critical to creating shared economic growth (The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2011)

Providing a high-quality education for all students is critical to America's economic future. Our nation's economic competitiveness and the path to the American dream depend on providing every child with an education that will enable them to succeed in a global economy that is grounded on knowledge and innovation (The White House, Issues, 2011). The challenge is the emergence of a global and highly competitive new knowledge-based economy, which requires enormous numbers of workers with education and training beyond high school. Our economic prosperity depends on the education level attained by the young workers who will replace the baby boomers in the American labor force. Demographers report that these new workers will come increasingly from those minority and low-income groups that our present education system is most likely to leave behind (Hunt, 2006).

A student's ability will become more important than ever. What students know and are able to do—their ability to analyze complex issues, communicate effectively, and contribute to the welfare of society—has never been more important (Hunt, 2006). Today's students will enter a job market that values skills and abilities far different from the traditional workplace of the past. Students must be able to collect, synthesize, and analyze information, then conduct targeted research and work with others to employ that newfound knowledge. In essence, students must learn how to learn, while responding to endlessly changing technologies and social, economic, and global conditions (Darling-Hammond et al., 2008).

Who will prepare this growing number of society demanded higher education students? Higher education institutions have a primary responsibility for academic quality; colleges and universities are the leaders and the key sources of authority in academic matters (Council for Higher Education Accreditation, 2009). Quality, effective teaching has become an issue of importance as the scene of higher education has been facing continuous changes (United States Department of Education, 2006). In order to sustain economic growth and social cohesiveness, America's higher education system will need to establish excellence, innovation and leadership. As higher education systems grow and diversify, society is increasingly concerned about the quality of programs. A *Report from the Greater Expectations Project on Accreditation and Assessment* (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2003) urges colleges and universities to embrace innovative ideas for new methods of teaching to improve the quality of higher education. The need for innovation has brought about a new focus of scholarship: The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.

The scholarship of teaching and learning has been discussed in the field of higher education for over two decades (Boyer, 1990). Discussions have focused on the differences among excellent teaching, scholarly teaching, and the scholarship of teaching and the distinctions that impact support, evaluation and rewards (McKinney, 2002). The work of Ernest Boyer (1990) and Charles Glassick (Glassick, Huber, & Maeroff, 1997) defined scholarship and envisioned how scholarship can be assessed. Boyer and Glassick have defined four areas of scholarship - the scholarship of discovery, the scholarship of integration, the scholarship of application, and the scholarship of teaching. Different types of scholarship have historically been used to peer review the work of faculty.

Universities across the nation face pressure from current and prospective students, stakeholders, and government agencies to show evidence of educational quality and teaching excellence (Wilson, 2010). The imperative to improve employment skills calls for quality teaching within educational institutions. In response, excellent teaching has become the main goal to focus upon and achieve for institutions of higher education. Universities are under increasing pressure as they attempt to educate increasing number of students and uphold excellent teaching standards (Wilson, 2010).

The United States currently lags behind other developed nations in college-graduation rates (National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, 2007). In a College Board study of 36 countries, the United States currently ranks 12th in the percentage of 25-34 year olds who possess at least an Associate's degree (NCHEMS, 2007). The National Survey of America's College Students (NSACS) is a study that examines the literacy of U.S. college students, providing information on how prepared these students are to continue to learn and use the skills that they will need in the years to come. Such an examination provides a valuable set of indicators of performance in higher education, informing such issues as the relationship among educational experience, literacy, and preparedness for the job market (American Institutes for Research, 2011).

The NSACS, sponsored by The Pew Charitable Trusts, collected data from a sample of graduating students at 80 randomly selected 2-year and 4-year colleges and universities (68 public and 12 private) from across the United States (American Institutes for Research, 2011). Twenty percent of U.S. college students completing four-year degrees—and 30 percent of students earning two-year degrees—have only basic quantitative literacy skills, meaning they are unable to estimate if their car has enough

gasoline to get to the next gas station or calculate the total cost of ordering office supplies (American Institutes for Research, 2011).

The Social Science Research Council (SSRC) recently released a report, *Improving Undergraduate Learning: Findings and Policy Recommendations from the College Learning Assessment Longitudinal Study* (The Carnegie Foundation, 2011). The study is based on an analysis of undergraduates at 24 four-year institutions to measure students' learning and study habits (The Carnegie Foundation, 2011). Traditional-age college freshmen from schools varying in size, selectivity, and missions, from liberal arts colleges to large research institutions were contacted to take a survey and the College Learning Assessment (The Carnegie Foundation, 2011). The CLA measures general competencies, such as critical thinking, analytical reasoning, and written communication. It included three, open-ended prompts. Among other findings of the study, a major discovery was 45 percent of students had no significant gains in critical thinking, complex reasoning, and written communication during the first two years of college; 36 percent demonstrated no significant gains in those areas over four years of college (The Carnegie Foundation, 2011).

The indicators of lack of student achievement are disconcerting, yet many researchers (Sanders & Horn, 1994; Medley & Mitzel, 1963; Marzano, 2003) indicate that one of the most prominent factors in student achievement is teacher quality. However, the search for the attributes, dispositions, knowledge, and instructional skills that define effective teachers continues as scholars seek to discover the teacher variables that lead to student achievement. A potential starting point would be to identify, describe,

and categorize the significant themes in the philosophy statements of award winning professors, by doing so, a sense of what makes an excellent teacher will develop.

Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The purpose of the descriptive research was to identify emergent themes present in the teaching philosophy statements of the United States Department of Agriculture Excellence in College and University Teaching in the Food and Agricultural Sciences award recipients. To accomplish that purpose, the following research objectives guided the study:

1. Identify the biographical, educational background, and professional experience profile of award recipients from 2000 – 2010.
2. Identify via content analysis emergent themes in the espoused philosophy statements of award recipients.
3. Describe frequency of emergent themes identified in the teaching philosophy statements of the award recipients.

Summary

The results of the study include the identification of emergent themes in the teaching philosophy statements of award-winning college professors and the frequency at which the themes occur. As our economy calls for improved employment skills, educational institutions must provide quality teaching to prepare students for success. A

series of studies has confirmed that access to an effective teacher is the single most important school related factor responsible for increased learning. Medley and Mitzel (1963) purport that an important factor in determining student learning is the teacher. A study conducted by Sanders and Horn (1994) reveals a 39 percentage-point difference in student achievement between students with “most effective” and “least effective” teachers. In classrooms headed by teachers characterized as “most effective,” students posted achievement gains of 53 percentage points over the course of one academic year, whereas in classrooms led by “least effective” teachers; student achievement gains averaged 14 percentage points (Marzano, 2003). The results of the study allow for future research to occur in determining if a disconnect exists between the stated teaching philosophy of award winning professors and their actual teaching practice. A better understanding of excellent teachers at the post-secondary level, could lead to improved teaching practices.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

The following literature review explores the existing knowledge on defining excellent post-secondary teaching. In order to identify the characteristics of excellent teaching the author has provided the following framework to guide the reader through a synthesis of previous research in the field. The literature review examines the philosophies of excellent teachers, the scholarship of teaching and learning, and the characteristics of effective teaching.

Teaching Philosophy Statements

A statement of teaching philosophy is a narrative description of one's idea of teaching, including the underpinning of one's teaching methods. A teaching philosophy statement is an avenue to voice holistic views of the teaching process, which includes the definitions and interaction between learning and teaching, perceptions of the teacher's and student's role, and goals and values of education (Chism, 1998; Goodyear & Allchin, 1998).

Teaching Philosophies in Higher Education

With universities taking strides to improve the educational experiences for its students, “the emphasis on portfolios for personnel decision making, new commitment by institutions to the teaching mission, and the tight academic job market have stimulated

more requests of college teachers to articulate their philosophies” (Chism, 1998). An educator is likely to be asked for a teaching philosophy statement at some point during their career. A philosophy statement is a synopsis of the “approach one would take on college teaching with reference to an understanding of student learning theory, summarizing systematic initiatives made over time to improve teaching and students' learning, and reflect upon ongoing areas of investigation” (The Pennsylvania State University Schreyers Institute for Teaching Excellence). Philosophy statements are often required by many colleges and universities from their college professors for promotion and tenure consideration. State and national teaching awards often request a philosophy statement during the application process (Chism, 1998).

Expressing an individual teaching philosophy provides the foundation by which to clarify goals, to guide behavior, to establish scholarly dialogue on teaching, and to organize evaluation. Statements of teaching philosophy function both personally and publicly. A professor who writes a teaching philosophy wants to document beliefs, values, and approaches. A philosophy statement may be written to clarify or reflect on practice, to receive feedback from colleagues, or to articulate a view of teaching for administrative decision-making (Murray, 1995).

Along with the rigorous standards set forth by colleges and universities, professors can use teaching philosophy statements to facilitate and lead teaching reflection exercises. By using reflection to consider teaching objectives, teaching style, instructional strategies, and future goals, teachers can grow on a personal and professional level (Chism, 1998). Chism (1998), in her article, *Developing a Philosophy of Teaching Statement*, suggests five major components: Conceptualization of learning,

Conceptualization of teaching, Goals for students, Implementation of the philosophy, a Professional growth plan. During reflection, college professors may find they hold differing values than when originally stated; “Reviewing and revising former statements of teaching philosophy can help teachers to reflect on their growth and renew their dedication to the goals and values that they hold” (Chism, 1998, p.1).

In Stephen Brookfield’s book, *The Skillful Teacher* (2006), he points out that the development of a teaching philosophy can be used for several purposes:

Personal purpose: “... a distinctive organizing vision—a clear picture of why you are doing what you are doing that you can call up at points of crisis— is crucial to your personal sanity and morale.” (pp. 16)

Pedagogical purpose: “Teaching is about making some kind of dent in the world so that the world is different than it was before you practiced your craft. Knowing clearly what kind of dent you want to make in the world means that you must continually ask yourself the most fundamental evaluative questions of all—What effect am I having on students and on their learning?” (pp. 18-19)

Goodyear and Allchin, in their study of the functions of a statement of teaching philosophy (Goodyear & Allchin, 1998), identify another purpose:

In preparing a statement of teaching philosophy, professors assess and examine themselves to articulate the goals they wish to achieve in teaching.... A clear vision of a teaching philosophy provides stability, continuity, and long-term guidance.... A well-defined philosophy can help them remain focused on their

teaching goals and to appreciate the personal and professional rewards of teaching. (pp. 106-107)

Effective teaching begins with the development of a teaching philosophy, a representation of the personal theory that educators construct to guide student learning (Schonwetter, Sokal, Friesen, & Taylor, 2002). However, as educators evolve and mature through their careers, so do their teaching philosophies. “An essential goal for every educator should be to grow continually as a teaching professional” (Titus & Gremler, 2010, pp.183). Importance lies in recognizing the significance of understanding teaching methodologies and the student learning process. All educators have an instructional approach. This approach may have been developed from their own careful, reflective thoughts based on what they have learned and studied, or it may have been developed without much thought and reflects that of another educator (Titus & Gremler, 2010).

Conscientious pedagogical reflection is necessary to produce a complete, well-developed teaching philosophy. The absence of pedagogical reflection can result in daily instruction that fails to reflect an instructor’s teaching philosophy or instructional belief system accurately. In particular, an underdeveloped teaching philosophy may translate into a teaching style full of inconsistencies, characterized by poorly coordinated and designed instruction. (Titus & Gremler, 2010, pp. 182).

Teaching is a scholarly activity when it is purposeful, reflective, documented, and shared in an evaluative forum (Menges & Weimer, 1996). Teaching philosophy statements can be defined as written statements narrating the teacher’s beliefs and

theories about teaching and student learning (Fitzmaurice & Coughlan, 2007). “By writing explicit teaching philosophies, teachers can understand why they teach the way they do and the goals and beliefs that underpin their practice” (Fitzmaurice & Coughlan, 2007, p. 40). Fitzmaurice and Coughlan (2007) stressed the importance of post-secondary teachers to examine their beliefs and attitudes to formulate a concept of higher education that goes beyond classroom competency and emphasizes teaching both as a pedagogical and moral activity.

Knowing about teaching methodologies and learning theories is not enough; lecturers must be encouraged to examine their beliefs and attitudes so that they can expand, hold up a critical light, and adjust their own ideological lens in ways that make the classroom more inclusive, exploratory, and transformative (Bartolome, 2004, p. 14).

Statements of teaching philosophy can be used to stimulate reflection on teaching (Chism, 1997-98; Titus & Gremler, 2010; Menges & Weimer, 1996). Seeing the need for a framework to assess teaching practices, Titus and Gremler (2010) proposed a framework using guided reflection as a suggested auditing approach to use to identify instructional inconsistencies that exist between teaching philosophies and behavior. Quite often the espoused teaching philosophy is not the one demonstrated in daily instruction. Commonly observed, often times on a regular basis, people believe one thing and do something quite different (Titus & Gremler, 2010). However, Titus and Gremler (2010) conducted a study where evidence showed strong correlation between a teaching-style audit that has both strengths and weaknesses as an approach to reflective teaching practice. Educators must continue to evolve and become effective instructors by

engaging, on a regular basis, in thoughtful self-examination of their teaching philosophy and teaching practices. Real growth comes only when educators carefully question and challenge their instructional beliefs and behaviors (Titus & Gremler, 2010).

Epistemological Beliefs

Epistemological beliefs influence the development of knowledge because they are considered to be the central values or theories that are functionally connected to most other beliefs and knowledge (Hofer & Pintrich, 1997). Personal epistemology influences teachers' theories of learning, and consequently, how one approaches, designs, and delivers classes. The terms used to describe epistemological positions vary, depending on whether it's describing the origin or the acquisition of knowledge. An instructor's teaching style is directly related to their philosophy of what it means to know and learn. The rationale for making particular teaching choices occurs when teachers reflect on what they believe about teaching and learning. Much of what teachers believe comes from their own experiences as a student, the images of teaching they hold, and their experiences as a teacher. Numerous philosophers have studied what it means to teach and learn, and have come up with various explanations of the process of becoming educated. Teachers begin to refine their own beliefs and understandings of what it means to know through examining numerous theories of knowledge and making sense of the processes of teaching and learning in their own minds.

Personal Epistemology

Epistemology is the study of beliefs about the source and acquisition of knowledge (Hofer, 2004). Epistemic beliefs refer to an individual's beliefs "about the definition of knowledge, how knowledge is constructed, how knowledge is evaluated, where knowledge resides, and how knowing occurs" (Hofer, 2002, pp. 4).

Epistemological beliefs are personal beliefs about learning and knowledge, and are considered to be core beliefs (Brownlee, Boulton-Lewis, & Purdie, 2002).

Epistemological beliefs reflect an individual's views on what knowledge is, how it can be gained, its degree of certainty, and the limits and criteria for determining knowledge (Brownlee, Boulton-Lewis, & Purdie, 2002). Epistemological beliefs (Hofer & Pintrich, 1997) combine the discovery and explanation of new knowledge, which influences how teachers learn to teach, plan to teach, make instructional decisions, and interact with students (Hofer & Pintrich, 1997). Epistemological beliefs have been researched to include such terms as attitudes, orientations, values, dispositions, personal theories, and perspectives (Hofer & Pintrich, 1997; Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992). Research on teachers' epistemological beliefs has compared the epistemological views carried out in traditional teaching approaches with those in constructivist approaches (Tobin & McRobbie, 1997). Studies have presented possible connections between teachers' personal epistemologies and teaching practices. In their extensive review of epistemological research, Hofer and Pintrich (1997) define personal epistemology as follows:

Epistemology is an area of philosophy concerned with the nature and justification of human knowledge. A growing area of interest for psychologists and educators

is that of personal epistemological development and epistemological beliefs: how individuals come to know, the theories and beliefs they hold about knowing, and the manner in which such epistemological premises are a part of and an influence on the cognitive processes of thinking and reasoning (pp. 88).

Teaching Epistemology

Like general teacher beliefs, epistemological beliefs also play an important role in education because these beliefs provide an idea of how teachers view students' understandings and how students obtain knowledge and in turn, these views held by teachers affect their methods of teaching (Brownlee, Boulton-Lewis, & Purdie, 2002). Hofer (2001) proposed that the epistemological theories of teachers impact their choice of classroom tasks and pedagogical practices. Learning and instructional theories are developed with respect to a particular set of expectations regarding what it means to know and learn. Such theories include objectivism, evaluatism, realism, empiricism, rationalism, idealism, relativism, pragmaticism, constructivism, subjectivism, interpretivism, absolutism, post positivism, and social constructionism which provide frameworks for describing learning and designing instruction.

Characteristics of Effective Teaching

Excellent teachers are those who motivate students, convey concepts, and help students overcome learning difficulties (Kreber, 2002). Past research has identified

characteristics of excellent post-secondary teaching (Rosenshine & Furst, 1971; Feldman, 1989; Dunkin & Precians, 1992; Lowman, 1996; Hativa, Barak, & Simhi, 2001; Sherman, Armistead, Fowler, Barksdale, & Reif, 1987). In 1971, Rosenshine and Furst conducted a meta-analysis of several studies examining relationships between teacher characteristics and student success. The study focused on general teacher behaviors that were present in class sessions where student achievement was the highest. Rosenshine and Furst found eleven characteristics of effective teachers; however, five variables proved to yield the strongest relationships with measures of student achievement. The five variables include: clarity, variability, enthusiasm, task oriented and/or business-like behavior, and student opportunity to learn (Rosenshine & Furst, 1971). The six variables that did not show a strong relationship between teacher characteristics and student success include: use of student ideas and general indirectness, criticism, use of structuring comments, types of questions, probing, and level of difficulty of instruction (Rosenshine & Furst, 1971).

Sherman, Armistead, Fowler, Barksdale, and Reif (1987) identify “five characteristics that have been regularly and consistently attributed to college instructors selected as excellent: enthusiasm, clarity, preparation/organization, stimulating, and love of knowledge” (Sherman, et al., 1987). Sherman, et al. (1987) divide knowledge into two dimensions; the first dimension being the teacher’s expertise of the subject matter and the second dimension being the teacher’s love and passion for the subject matter. Feldman (1989) undertook a meta-analysis of “46 studies having information about the relationships between student learning and evaluation of instruction along one or more specific instructional dimensions” (p. 587).

Feldman's dimensions of exemplary teaching included: Teacher's Preparation: Organization of the course; Clarity and understandableness; Perceived outcome or impact of instruction; Teacher's stimulation of interest in the course and its subject matter; Teacher's encouragement of questions and discussion, and openness to opinion of others; Teacher's availability and helpfulness; Teacher's elocutionary skills; Clarity of course objectives and requirements; Teacher's knowledge of the subject; Teacher's sensitivity to, and concern with, class level and progress; Teacher's enthusiasm (for subject and for teaching); Intellectual challenge and encouragement of independent thought (by teacher and course) (Feldman, 1988 and 1989).

Similarity of Findings

There are re-occurring frameworks between the studies conducted by Sherman et al., Rosenshine and Furst, and Feldman. Rosenshine and Furst (1971) characterized clarity as a teacher explaining concepts clearly, plans for and demonstrates knowledge of content/subject matter, and answers student questions intelligently. Clarity is described as the teacher's ability to ensure students have a clear understanding of the material presented (Sherman et al., 1987). Preparation and organization is defined by Sherman, et al. (1987) as the types of activities the teacher performs to guarantee that a lesson or course can be conducted as planned. Preparation and organization also provide the teacher with direction for class progression and achievement (Sherman, et al., 1987). Enthusiasm was also found as a mutual dimension. Enthusiasm often emphasizes a teacher's personality qualities. A teacher's enthusiasm is often recognized through their

deep interest for the content being taught and the enjoyment of teaching (Sherman, et al., 1987). Rosenshine and Furst (1971) identified enthusiasm as a teacher using movement, gestures, and voice inflections; showing genuine care for students; using excitement, involvement, or passion regarding the subject matter. A stimulating teacher is defined as someone who creates interest in the subject matter being taught and helps students develop critical thinking skills (Sherman, et al., 1987). Stimulating is also recognized as entertaining, motivating, interesting, and thought-provoking. The last effective teaching characteristic is knowledge (Sherman, et al., 1987).

Developing Teaching Excellence

“Teaching excellence appears most likely to emerge when instructors can focus on developing as excellent instructors. In part, this requires understanding the sequence and the characteristics of development” (Sherman, et al., 1987, p.73). Kreber (2002) acknowledges excellent teaching to be “a very time-consuming but also scholarly activity in that it requires sound knowledge of one’s discipline as well as a good understanding of how to help students grow within, and perhaps even beyond, the discipline” (Kreber, 2002, p. 9). Mentkowski and colleagues (2000) discuss four ways in which knowledge about learning and teaching can be constructed: through formal research, collaborative inquiry, the literature, and practice or experience. Dunkin and Precians (1992) found through their study of award-winning university teachers similar characteristics indicative of excellent university teaching. Dunkin and Precians (1992) conducted a study which examined twelve identified recipients of The University of Sydney Awards for

Excellence in Teaching in 1990 and 1991. Through interview questions, Dunkin and Precians (1992) identified four dimensions of effective teaching. The four dimensions included “teaching as structuring learning, teaching as motivating learning, teaching as encouraging activity and independence in learning, and teaching as establishing interpersonal relations conducive to learning” (Dunkin & Precians, 1992, p.487).

Exemplary teachers possess universal effective teaching characteristics (Havita, Barak, & Simhi, 2001; Lowman, 1996). “Exemplary teachers are those who are likely to promote unusually high levels of learning in their students, while also creating the positive memories of learning that come to our minds years later in moments of reflection” (Lowman, 1996, p.39). Lowman (1996) conducted an observational study in which a theoretical model of effective college teachers was developed. The research concluded that “exemplary college teachers were those who excelled on at least one of two dimensions: the ability to generate intellectual excitement in students and/or to generate interpersonal rapport in students” (Lowman, 1996, p.34). Havita, Barak, and Simhi (2001) conducted a study to identify effective teaching strategies of exemplary teachers. The study identifies lesson organization, lesson clarity, making a lesson interesting/engaging, and classroom climate as four effective teaching characteristics (Havita, et al., 2001). “This study supports the intuitive belief of education professionals that different exemplary teachers achieve effectiveness in very different ways” (Havita, et al., 2001, p.725). Although it is imperative for excellent teachers to maintain a balance of all four dimensions, it is common to see exemplary teachers exhibiting stronger skill in certain dimension areas than other dimension areas. However, all four dimensions still

remain the basic construct of characteristics of excellent university teaching (Havita, et al., 2001).

Effective Teaching in Higher Education

Chickering and Gamson (1987) provided a framework of good practice for higher education institutions. In the bulletin, they described seven principles of good practices: (a) encourages student faculty contact, (b) encourages cooperation among students, (c) encourages active learning, (d) gives prompt feedback, (e) emphasizes time on task, (f) communicates high expectations, and (g) respects diverse talents and ways of learning. Each principle illustrates specific behaviors instructors can adopt to better the educative experience.

Kuh (1996) describes ten conditions that teaching professionals must practice to foster student learning and personal development in higher education that have been identified from previous research studies. These conditions include:

1. Clear, coherent, and consistently expressed educational purposes;
2. An institutional philosophy that embraces a holistic view of talent development;
3. A balanced curricular approach to general education;
4. Complementary institutional policies and practices congruent with students' characteristics and needs;
5. High, clear expectations for student performance;
6. Use of effective teaching approaches;

7. Systematic assessment of student performance and institutional environments, policies, and practices;
8. Ample opportunities for student involvement in educationally purposeful out-of-class activities;
9. Human-scale settings characterized by ethics of membership and care; and
10. An ethos of learning that pervades all aspects of the institution (i.e., the institutional culture communicates to students, faculty, and staff at a deep, almost subconscious level the central role of learning in the community).

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

In 1990, The Carnegie Foundation published Ernest Boyer's "Scholarship Reconsidered." Boyer (1990) focused his debate on not only on teaching but on teaching as a part of the larger whole of academic work. Boyer (1990) focused on the idea that scholarship exists in all aspects of academic work. There are four areas of scholarship of which Boyer focused. These are:

- (a) The scholarship of discovery – closely aligned with traditional research;
- (b) The scholarship of integration - making connections across disciplines;
- (c) The scholarship of application - using research findings and innovations to remedy societal problems; and

- (d) The scholarship of teaching – both educates and entices future scholars by communicating the beauty and enlightenment at the heart of significant knowledge (Boyer, 1990).

Kreber and Cranton (2000) view the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning as “ongoing learning about teaching and the demonstration of such knowledge” (p. 488). While Richlin (2001) argues, “The scholarship part of the process involves composing selected portions of the investigation and findings [or integration or reflection] into a manuscript to be submitted to an appropriate journal or conference venue” (Richlin, 2001, p. 61). Martin, Benjamin, Prosser, and Trigwell (1999) argue that the scholarship of teaching is three related activities: engagement with the existing knowledge on teaching and learning, self-reflection on teaching and learning in one’s discipline, and public sharing of ideas about teaching and learning within the discipline.

Trigwell, Martin, Benjamin, and Prosser (2000) conducted an empirical study to identify and analyze the variation in approaches to the scholarship of teaching. The researchers used a phenomenographical approach to interview university faculty. The data collected was analyzed and resulted in the following five categories of description of approach to the scholarship of teaching:

- (a) Knowing the literature on teaching by collecting and reading the literature;
- (b) Improving teaching by using the literature on teaching;
- (c) Improving student learning by investigating one’s own teaching and student learning;
- (d) Improving student learning by attending to the literature of discipline as well as that on teaching and learning, and relating one to the other; and

- (e) Improve student learning generally, by communicating the results of one's own work on teaching and learning to a larger audience.

These results found by Trigwell et. al (2000) suggested that the approach to the scholarship of teaching involves focusing on the literature to explore and reflect upon one's teaching to improve and enhance student learning and share reflections and findings to colleagues.

“The very nature of a research university places a special emphasis on scholarship. It is through generating and disseminating new knowledge that research universities define their unique qualities” (Bass, 1999). Faculty scholarship is necessary to maintain effective instruction in all institutions of higher education. All faculty at institutions of higher education pursue scholarship designed to ensure they are current in the theory, knowledge, skills, and pedagogy of their discipline. The institution defines the scholarly expectations for faculty consistent with its mission and purposes and the level of degrees offered. Scholarship and instruction are integrated and mutually important. Through scholarship, which entails creation, application, synthesis, and transmission of knowledge, faculties acquire and sustain their expertise, thereby contributing to the strength and life of their teaching. Shulman (2000) presented three arguments for engaging in Scholarship of Teaching and Learning associated with professionalism, pragmatism and policy. Shulman (2000) argued that the most important reason for engaging in the scholarship of teaching is the professional role and responsibility it entails. The responsibilities held by professionals in higher education are to discover, to connect, to apply, and to teach (Shulman, 2000). Shulman (2000) purported pragmatism helps guide faculty members' efforts in the design and adaptation of teaching in the

interests of student learning. Shulman (2000) stated that by engaging in a purposive reflection, documentation, assessment and analysis of teaching and learning, one can improve their own teaching. In higher education, faculty members are also entangled in webs of national, state and local policy (Shulman, 2000).

Unless we can provide relevant evidence of the processes and products of our pedagogies, we will find ourselves making empty claims and offering degraded arguments.... New forms of institutional research will be developed that are learning-focused, domain specific, and oriented toward analyzing the educative experiences and outcomes that institutions support or fail to support (Shulman, 2000, pp. 49-50).

Andresen (2000) defined the 'scholarly teacher' as one whose:

ideal will be to become, and remain, well-informed and critically reflective, regarding the entire universe of salient events, activities, intentions and outcomes that comprise the practice of teaching, never forgetting, of course, the matter of degree, and the question of field or disciplinary context. (pp. 142)

Other impacts and outcomes of engaging in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning include raising the status and recognition of teaching, energizing and renewing enthusiasm for teaching, providing satisfaction and rewards through successful scholarship, widening and strengthening communities of teachers/scholars, strengthening professional development programs, improving learning, and reaching related policies and procedures (Ciccone, 2008).

Recognized Excellent Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Colleges of Agriculture

The United States Department of Agriculture National Awards Program for Excellence in College and University Teaching in the Food and Agricultural Sciences began under the auspices of Dr. K. Jane Coulter, former Deputy Administrator of the Higher Education Programs unit within the United States Department of Agriculture. Collaboration began to develop the teaching award with the Dr. K. Jane Coulter and the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges (NASULGC) organization to develop a national recognition program for teachers. It was NASULGC that got the legislation put before Congress to address the national priority of providing sufficient quality and quantity of graduates entering the food and agricultural sciences workforce. Since its inception, the United States Department of Agriculture and National Institute of Food and Agriculture, offers a National Awards Program for Excellence in College and University Teaching in the Food and Agricultural Sciences (United States Department of Agriculture, 2010).

The United States Department of Agriculture's National Awards Program for Excellence in College and University Teaching in the Food and Agricultural Sciences is offered annually to recognize and honor faculty who practice and promote effective, innovative teaching. Recipients must exhibit sustained, meritorious and exceptional teaching at the postsecondary level within the food and agricultural sciences. A goal of the award program is to focus national on the role of teaching in colleges and universities in the Food and Agricultural Sciences. The award program strives to assist in "recruiting

and retaining the scientific and professional expertise essential to the future growth and progress of our nation's food and agricultural system” (USDA, 2010).

The eligibility criteria for those interested in nomination include: teacher nominees must be employed with a full time appointment with an active teaching responsibility within a college or university that (1) confers a baccalaureate or higher degree in at least one area of the food and agricultural sciences for which the teacher is nominated, (2) has demonstrated a commitment to the food and agricultural sciences, and (3) attributes a high priority to its education mission (USDA, 2010).

The awards program requests interested nominees submit a nomination packet. The primary component of that package is a written response to six Evaluation Criteria categories. The categories include: (1) Teaching Quality Assessment, (2) Philosophy of Teaching and Teaching Methodology, (3) Service to the Teaching Profession and the Scholarship of Teaching, (4) Service to Students, (5) Professional Growth and Competencies Development, and (6) Endorsement by Administrator, Alumnus, and Colleague. The evaluation process of the packets includes both USDA internal staff review and merit evaluation by a panel of experts. The peer review panel may consist of a combination of university faculty and administrators, public school teachers or administrators, representatives from professional associations, and personnel from other federal agencies. Reviewers follow strict rules governing conflict of interest (USDA, 2010).

Mitzel's Theory on Teaching and Learning

The study was founded in Mitzel's (1960) theory on teaching and learning and Bandura's (1977) Self Efficacy Theory. Mitzel (1960) contended that the teaching and learning process foci include presage variables, context variables, process variables, and product variables. Mitzel (1960) defined presage variables as teacher characteristics. Context variables are defined as student characteristics, and process variables that reflect classroom activities. Product variables describe the outcomes of teaching. According to Mitzel (1960), presage variables and context variables determine the significance of process variables. The interaction of presage, context, and process variables impact the resultant product variables.

Presage variables include those that influence teachers and their teaching behaviors (i.e., those things that teachers contribute to the learning process). Presage variables concern traits that teachers have that affect the teaching process (Dunkin & Biddle, 1974; Clark & Peterson, 1986). Presage variables consist of teacher formative experiences, their training experiences and their personal attributes. Teacher formative experiences are inclusive of all the incidences and situations that teachers go through that may mold and shape their behavior and mental reactions. Training experiences include the events that have occurred to prepare for a teaching career, such as attending college or a university. These events include the undergraduate courses taken, post-graduate education, teaching practice experience, in-service and all experiences that have the possibilities of shaping their beliefs in the teaching profession. Teacher attributes include their beliefs, attitudes, perceptions and background knowledge toward the

teaching/learning process. These are presumed to characterize the individual teachers because they carry these attributes within themselves (Dunkin & Biddle, 1974). They are embedded deep within themselves and they serve to explain the teachers' behavior in response to a variety of situations.

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory

Bandura's (1977) Social Cognitive Theory indicated that human achievement is shaped by the interaction of three variables: behavior, personal factors, and environmental factors. Social cognitive theory provides an agentic conceptual framework within which to examine the determinants and mechanisms of such effects. Human behavior has often been explained in terms of unidirectional causation, in which behavior is shaped and controlled either by environmental influences or by internal dispositions. Social cognitive theory explains psychosocial functioning in terms of triadic reciprocal causation (Bandura, 1986). Personal factors in the form of cognitive, affective, and biological events, behavioral patterns, and environmental events all operate as interacting determinants that influence each other bidirectionally. According to Bandura, environment provides the cognitive representations that influence a person's, including a teacher's, behavior. Personal factors are self-beliefs that facilitate a regulatory measure of control about the behavior. The social cognition theory assumption of behavioral change is that people actively participate in their own personal development.

Grounded in Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory is the Teacher Self-Efficacy theory. According to Bandura, behavior is determined by the reciprocal interactions that

occur among specific behavioral, cognitive, and environmental factors. Social cognitive theory proposes that confidence in one's ability to perform a behavior is strongly related to behavior change and maintenance. Bandura stated, self-efficacy beliefs influence the choices and goals people make, the amount of effort they apply toward these goals, how long they persevere at a task in times of failure or difficulty, and the amount of stress that is experienced (Frederickson & Turner, 2003). This theory provides a basis to further understand needs and behaviors of teachers to include their beliefs toward teaching and learning.

Self-efficacy is defined as a social cognition construct related to a person's self-beliefs in his or her ability to perform specific tasks, regulate their ability, and affect their lives. According to Bandura's social cognitive theory (1977), the cognitive self-regulation process mediates experience and behavior; thus people behave proactively, engaging in goal setting. This self-directedness is mediated by self-reflective and self-reactive abilities which interact with environmental influences.

Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory assumed that people are capable of human agency, or intentional pursuit of courses of action, and that such agency operates in a process called triadic reciprocal causation. Reciprocal causation is a multi-directional model suggesting that our human agency results in future behavior as a function of three interrelated forces: environmental influences, one's behavior, and internal personal factors such as cognitive, affective, and biological processes. The trinity mutually impacts its members, determines to a large what one comes to believe about oneself, and affects the choices one makes and actions one takes. The theory purported that individuals are products of the dynamic interplay between the external, the internal, and

our current and past behavior. Social cognitive theory thus would suggest teachers work to improve their students' emotional states and correct their faulty self-beliefs (personal factors), improve their academic skills and self-regulatory practices (behavior), and alter the school and classroom structures to enhance student success (environmental factors).

Summary

Many researchers (Sanders & Horn, 1994; Medley & Mitzel, 1963; Marzano, 2003) indicated that one of the most prominent factors in student achievement is teacher quality. Andrews, Garrison, and Magnusson (1996) noted that “excellence in teaching is complex and difficult to achieve. It is about content expertise and methodological technique, as well as about participants in the educational enterprise valuing and achieving quality outcomes” (p. 101). Past research has identified characteristics of excellent post-secondary teaching (Rosenshine & Furst, 1971; Feldman, 1989; Dunkin & Precians, 1992; Lowman, 1996; Hativa, Barak, and Simhi, 2001; Sherman, Armistead, Fowler, Barksdale, & Reif, 1987).

Exemplary teachers possess universal effective teaching characteristics (Hativa, Barak, & Simhi, 2001; Lowman, 1996). “Exemplary teachers are those who are likely to promote unusually high levels of learning in their students, while also creating the positive memories of learning that come to our minds years later in moments of reflection” (Lowman, 1996, p.39). Chickering and Gamson (1987) provided a framework of good practice for higher education institutions. The framework described seven principles of good practices: (a) encourages student faculty contact, (b) encourages

cooperation among students, (c) encourages active learning, (d) gives prompt feedback, (e) emphasizes time on task, (f) communicates high expectations, and (g) respects diverse talents and ways of learning.

Effective teaching begins with the development of a teaching philosophy, a representation of the personal theory that educators construct to guide student learning (Schonwetter, Sokal, Friesen, & Taylor, 2002). Teaching philosophy statements can be defined as written statements narrating the teacher's beliefs and theories about teaching and student learning (Fitzmaurice & Coughlan, 2007). "By writing explicit teaching philosophies, teachers can understand why they teach the way they do and the goals and beliefs that underpin their practice" (Fitzmaurice & Coughlan, 2007, p. 40).

The study was founded in Mitzel's (1960) theory on teaching and learning and Bandura's (1977) Self Efficacy Theory. Mitzel (1960) contended that the teaching and learning process foci include presage variables, context variables, process variables, and product variables. Mitzel (1960) defined presage variables as teacher characteristics. Presage variables concern traits that teachers have that affect the teaching process (Dunkin & Biddle, 1974; Clark & Peterson, 1986). Teacher attributes include their beliefs, attitudes, perceptions and background knowledge toward the teaching/learning process. These are presumed to characterize the individual teachers because they carry these attributes within themselves (Dunkin & Biddle, 1974). They are embedded deep within themselves and they serve to explain the teachers' behavior in response to a variety of situations. According to Mitzel (1960), presage variables and context variables determine the significance of process variables. The interaction of presage, context, and process variables impact the resultant product variables. Bandura's (1977) Social

Cognitive Theory indicated that human achievement is shaped by the interaction of three variables: behavior, personal factors, and environmental factors. According to Bandura, environment provides the cognitive representations that influence a person's, including a teacher's, behavior. Personal factors are self-beliefs that facilitate a regulatory measure of control about the behavior. The social cognition theory assumption of behavioral change is that people actively participate in their own personal development.

Chapter 3 – Methods

In the following chapter, the specific methods followed in the research study are described. The theoretical foundation and conceptual framework are presented as well as a description of the target population. In addition, efforts to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings are clearly detailed.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the research study was to identify emergent themes present in the teaching philosophy statements of the United States Department of Agriculture Excellence in College and University Teaching in the Food and Agricultural Sciences award recipients. To accomplish that purpose the following research objectives guided the study:

1. Identify the biographical, educational background, and professional experience profile of award recipients from 2000 – 2010.
2. Identify via content analysis emergent themes in the espoused philosophy statements of award recipients.
3. Describe frequency of emergent themes identified in the teaching philosophy statements of the award recipients.

Conceptual Framework

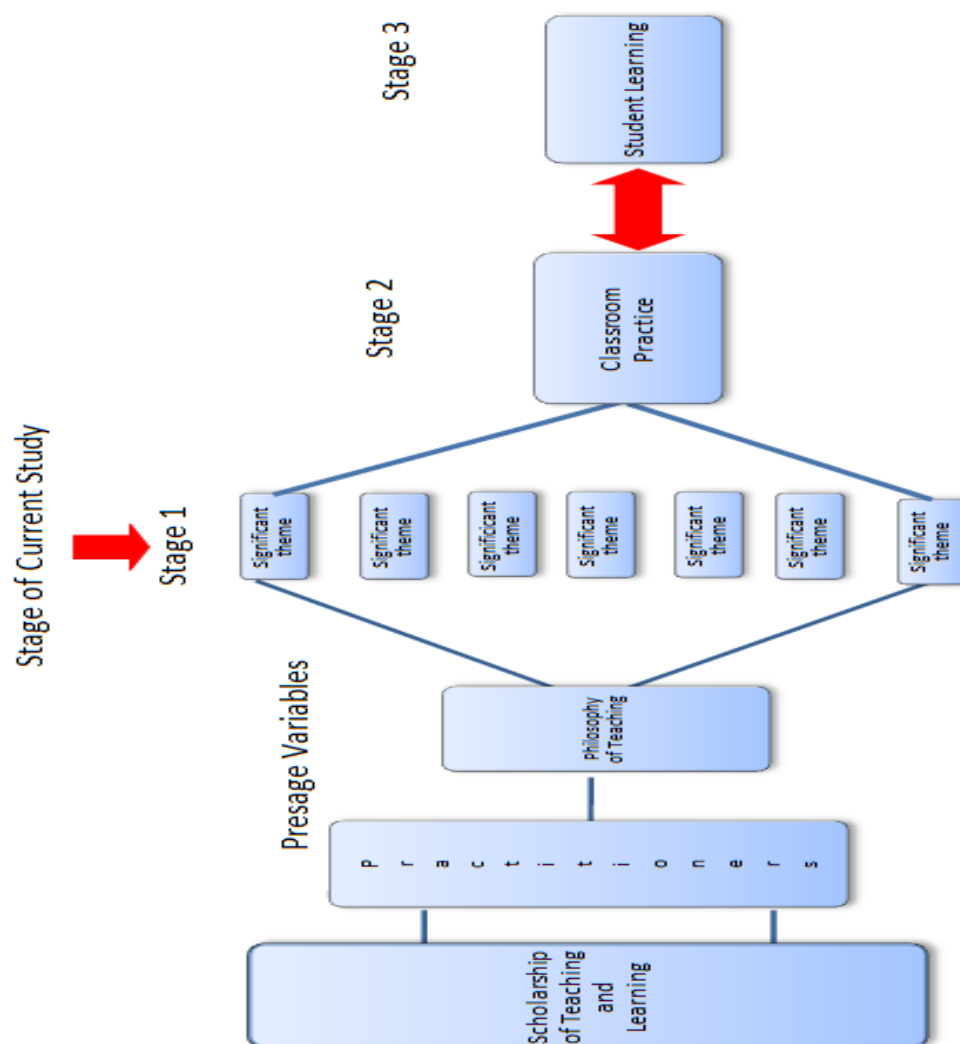


Figure 3.1. Conceptual Framework. In Stage 1 of the research study, significant themes in the teaching philosophy statements of award-winning professors were identified. Stage 2 will focus on determining if a disconnect exists between the stated teaching philosophy of award winning professors and their actual teaching practice. The final stage, Stage 3, will analyze the classroom practice of award winning professors and the impact had on student learning.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical foundation of the study was founded in Mitzel's (1960) theory on teaching and learning and Bandura's (1977) Self Efficacy Theory. Mitzel (1960) contended that the teaching and learning process concentrations include presage variables, context variables, process variables, and product variables. Mitzel (1960) defined presage variables as teacher characteristics. Presage variables concern traits that teachers have that affect the teaching process (Dunkin & Biddle, 1974; Clark & Peterson, 1986). Presage variables consist of teacher formative experiences, their training experiences and their personal attributes. Teacher formative experiences are inclusive of all the incidences and situations that teachers go through that may mold and shape their behavior and mental reactions. Teacher attributes include their beliefs, attitudes, perceptions and background knowledge toward the teaching/learning process. These are presumed to characterize the individual teachers because they carry these attributes within themselves (Dunkin & Biddle, 1974). They are embedded deep within themselves and they serve to explain the teachers' behavior in response to a variety of situations. According to Mitzel (1960), presage variables and context variables determine the significance of process variables. The interaction of presage, context, and process variables impact the resultant product variables. Dunkin and Biddle (1974) illustrates the interaction of the presage, context and process variables on the product variables (see Figure 3.2).

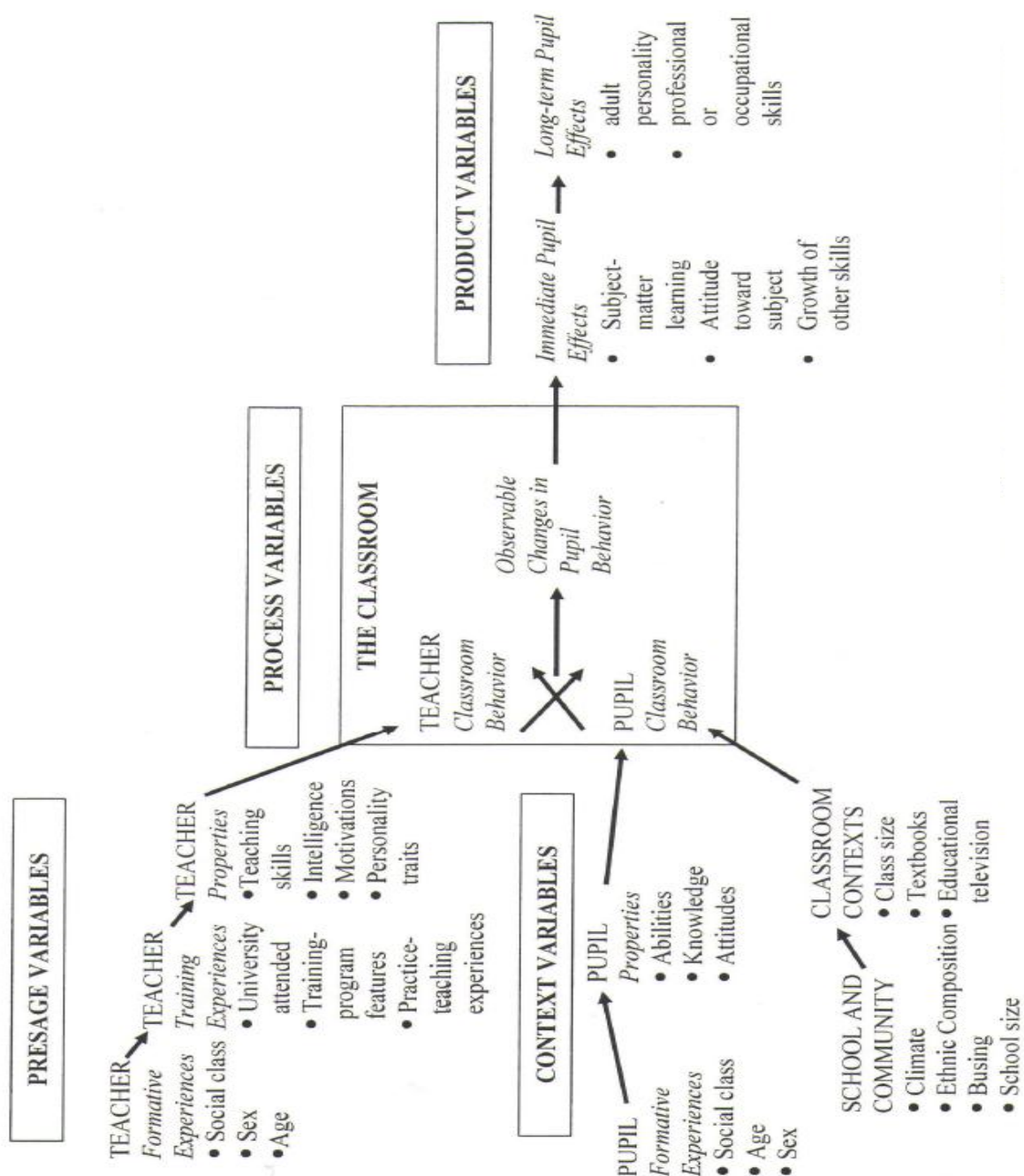


Figure 3.2. Interaction of the presage, context and process variables on the product variables, from Dunkin and Biddle (1974); as cited in Cruickshank, D. (1990). *Research that informs teachers and teacher education*. Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation.

Bandura's (1977) Social Cognitive Theory indicates that human achievement is shaped by the interaction of three variables: behavior, personal factors, and environmental factors (see Figure 3.3.). According to Bandura, environment provides the cognitive representations that influence a person's, including a teacher's, behavior. Personal factors are self-beliefs that facilitate a regulatory measure of control about the behavior. The social cognition theory assumption of behavioral change is that people actively participate in their own personal development.

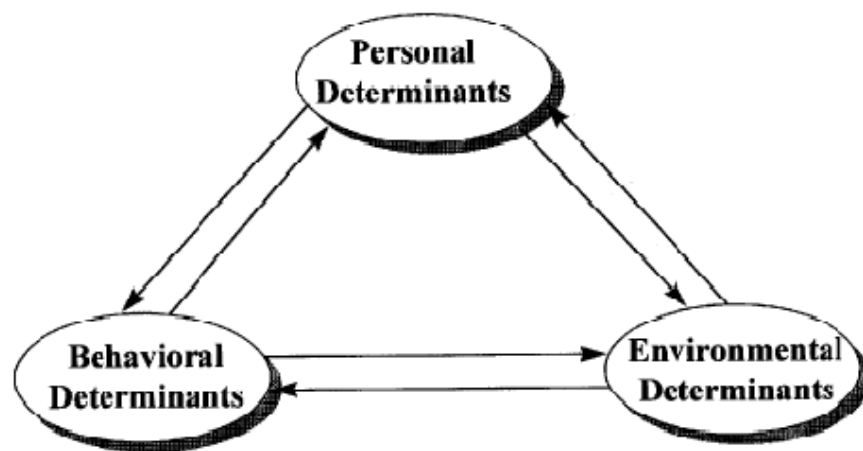


Figure 3.3. Schematization of triadic reciprocal causation in the causal model of social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986).

Study Population

The participants of the study were the national/regional award winners of the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Awards Program for Excellence in College and University Teaching in the Food and Agricultural Sciences. The selected recipients of the USDA National Awards Program for Excellence in College and University Teaching in the Food and Agricultural Sciences were awardees from the years 2000 - 2010. The total number of awardees from 2000-2010 is 110 recipients. A census of all 110 recipients was used. The participants were listed on the USDA National Awards Program for Excellence in College and University Teaching in the Food and Agricultural Sciences webpage.

Prior to 2005, the award program differed from how it currently distributes awards. From the years 2000 to 2004, two individuals were named national recipients of the award and eight regional recipients were recognized. Thus, there were ten total recipients of a USDA Teaching Excellence award each year from 2000 to 2004. From 2005 forward, there are two national awards given, six regional winners which consisted of one from each of the four regions and two from "at-large," and finally two New Teacher awards. In 2005, the New Teacher award program was developed, but –due to a static program budget - USDA had to keep the total number of awards at ten. The two national recipients were kept constant, and two of what were the eight remaining regional awards were those recognized as the two New Teacher recipients. For further illustration, see Table 3.1.

Table 3.1

Annual Distribution of Award Recipients from 2000 – 2010

2000-2004	2005-2010
2 National Recipients	2 National Recipients
8 Regional Recipients (2 from each of the 4 regions)	6 Regional Recipients (1 from each of the 4 regions; 2 “at large”)
	2 New Teacher Recipients
10 Annually	10 Annually
50 Recipients Total	60 Recipients Total

Award Winning Population Selection Process

The United States Department of Agriculture’s National Awards Program for Excellence in College and University Teaching in the Food and Agricultural Sciences is offered annually to recognize and honor faculty who practice and promote effective, innovative teaching. Recipients must have exhibited sustained, meritorious and exceptional teaching at the postsecondary level within the food and agricultural sciences. A goal of the award program is to focus nationally on the role of teaching in colleges and universities in the Food and Agricultural Sciences. The award program strives to assist in “recruiting and retaining the scientific and professional expertise essential to the future growth and progress of our nation's food and agricultural system” (United States Department of Agriculture, 2010).

The eligibility criteria for those interested in nomination include: teacher nominees must be employed with a full time appointment and active teaching responsibility within a college or university that (1) confers a baccalaureate or higher degree in at least one area of the food and agricultural sciences for which the teacher is nominated, (2) has demonstrated a commitment to the food and agricultural sciences, and (3) attributes a high priority to its education mission (USDA, 2010).

The awards program requests interested nominees submit a nomination packet. The primary component of that package is a written response to six Evaluation Criteria categories. The categories include: (1) Teaching Quality Assessment, (2) Philosophy of Teaching and Teaching Methodology, (3) Service to the Teaching Profession and the Scholarship of Teaching, (4) Service to Students, (5) Professional Growth and Competencies Development, and (6) Endorsement by Administrator, Alumnus, and Colleague. The evaluation process of the packets includes both USDA internal staff review and merit evaluation by a panel of experts. The peer review panel may consist of a combination of university faculty and administrators, public school teachers or administrators, representatives from professional associations, and personnel from other federal agencies. Reviewers follow strict rules governing conflict of interest (USDA, 2010). Table 3.2 illustrates each evaluation criterion category and weight for selection.

Table 3.2

USDA Award Evaluation Criterion Categories and Weight

Evaluation Criterion	Weight
Teacher Quality Assessment	20%
Philosophy of Teaching and Teaching Methodology	20%
Service to the Teaching Profession and the Scholarship of Teaching	20%
Service to Students	15%
Professional Growth and Competencies Development	15%
Endorsement by Administrator, Alumnus, and Colleague	10%

Qualitative Research Design

To analyze the teaching philosophy statements, content analysis was used.

Content analysis is a technique that enables researchers to study human behavior in an indirect way, through an analysis of their communications (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009).

Neuendorf (2002) defines content analysis as “the systematic, objective, quantitative analysis of message characteristics” (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 1). Content analysis has been primarily used as a quantitative research method until recent decades (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2006).

Qualitative content analysis takes effect at the place where quantitative presentation reaches its limits. Qualitative content analysis has been defined as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). Qualitative content analysis goes beyond merely counting words and extracting objective content from texts to examine themes and patterns that appear or are latent in the manifest content. Weber (1990) purported that the best content-analytic studies use both qualitative and quantitative strategies. As suggested by Smith (1975), “qualitative analysis deals with the forms and antecedent-consequent patterns of form, while quantitative analysis deals with duration and frequency of form” (Smith, 1975, p.218).

The process of qualitative content analysis involves condensing raw data including text information into categories or themes based on valid inference and interpretation (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2006). The process uses inductive reasoning, by which themes and categories emerge from the data through the researcher’s careful examination and constant comparison. But qualitative content analysis does not need to exclude deductive reasoning (Patton, 2002). Generating concepts or variables from theory or previous studies is also very useful for qualitative research, especially at the inception of data analysis (Berg, 2001).

Hsieh and Shannon (2005) discussed three approaches to qualitative content analysis, based on the degree of involvement of inductive reasoning. The first is conventional qualitative content analysis, in which coding categories are derived directly and inductively from the raw data. The approach is used for the development of grounded

theory. The second approach is directed content analysis, in which initial coding starts with a theory or relevant research findings. Then, during data analysis, the researchers immerse themselves in the data and allow themes to emerge from the data. The purpose of the approach usually is to validate or extend a conceptual framework or theory. The third approach is summative content analysis, which starts with the counting of words or manifest content, then extends the analysis to include latent meanings and themes. The summative content analysis approach seems quantitative in the early stages, but its goal is to explore the usage of the words/indicators in an inductive manner.

A conventional qualitative content analysis approach was used while utilizing a constant comparative strategy between the philosophy statements. Themes emerged both from the data (an inductive approach) and from the investigator's prior theoretical understanding of the phenomenon under study (an *a priori* approach). Researchers identified and quantified the presence of words and concepts that represent emergent themes within the teaching philosophy statements.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher's schooling and experiences as an agriculture educator were valuable in the research process. Upon graduation from The Pennsylvania State University in 2007 with a Bachelors of Science degree in Agriculture and Extension Education, the researcher's professional career began as a Natural Resource Management teacher. The teaching opportunity was the first glimpse had of the impact a teacher has on the teaching and learning experience of students. The experience provided the

researcher the first opportunity to engage in articulating the importance of agricultural literacy, as well as the opportunity to improve personal pedagogy skills.

After one year of teaching, the researcher took another job as an agriscience educator. As a member of a two teacher Agriscience department, the researcher's teaching appointment included instructing all agriculture mechanics classes, advising FFA, supervising student projects, prepare and organize departmental mission and vision, and provided leadership to the program. A critical component of the researcher's teaching philosophy was allowing students to apply their knowledge and skill to an actual real-life experience. An instructional goal was to prepare students to critically think and solve problem-based assignments relevant to situations in the classroom, thus equip them for those experiences outside of the classroom.

The researcher's current professional focus is in investigating effective teaching and learning practices at the post-secondary level. Teaching practices impact student learning. Through effective teaching practices, teachers and students see desired outcomes. The question "*What happens in the college classroom?*" is one that leads to inquiry into the variables that affect level of student cognition, and thus, transfer of learning. By understanding the relationship of the instructor, the students, and the classroom climate on student learning, the researcher hopes to assist instructors in developing classroom practices and strategies that enhance and improve the learning process. With this prior knowledge and work experience the researcher was able to identify the emergent themes in the teaching philosophy statements of the teaching excellence award recipients.

Data Collection

The 110 award recipients of the USDA National Awards Program for Excellence in College and University Teaching in the Food and Agricultural Sciences from the years 2000 – 2010 was the population frame for the research study. Upon approval from The Pennsylvania State University Institutional Review Board (IRB#36058), a modified Dillman approach to social science research was utilized. Participants were contacted by email. The email informed participants of the study's purpose and objectives. The participants were asked to submit the philosophy of teaching statement they previously submitted to the USDA National Awards Program for Excellence in College and University Teaching in the Food and Agricultural Sciences. Participants were presented with an implied consent form in the initial recruitment email. Embedded in the initial recruitment email was a link to an online demographic survey. The participants who agreed to participate in the study; sent a copy of their philosophy statement and completed an online demographic survey.

Upon delivery of the introduction letter and study explanation to the award recipients, the teaching philosophy was obtained. The philosophy statement was collected from award recipients in the form of a word document sent in a reply email as an attachment. As the statements were submitted, each philosophy statement was numbered. Award recipients who did not reply within two weeks were sent an email reminder. Altogether, as many as four contacts were made, three of which were by email, over a period of one month. A fourth and final contact was made by phone to those award recipients who had not responded to any of the previous three emails. For the

participants who were unable to locate their original, award winning philosophy statement, the individuals were asked to send an email granting approval for the researcher to have the philosophy statement released from the United States Department of Agriculture, Division of Community and Education, the office in which the award applications are received during the award application process and housed after award winners are selected. Reminder emails were sent out to non-respondents two weeks and four weeks post the initial introduction and recruitment letter. Using the process a total of 86 philosophy statements were obtained, which is 78.2 percent of the target population.

Demographic Survey

Included in the emails to the participants was a link to an online demographic survey facilitated through SurveyMonkey© (see Appendix A). As mentioned, a modified Dillman approach was used for initial contact and follow-up reminders to non-respondents. The survey was reviewed by a panel of experts for face and content validity. The demographic survey was twelve demographic questions in length. Sixty four ($n = 64$) award winners elected to participate in completing the online demographic survey, for an overall response rate of 58.2 percent.

Data Quality

There is no ultimate demonstration of validity, however, researchers can achieve maximum clarity and agreement and make validity more, rather than less likely (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Theme identification involves judgments on the part of the principal researcher. If the judgments are made explicit and clear, then readers can argue with the researcher's conclusions (Agar, 1980). This is one of the motivations for the principal investigator to outline, in detail, the techniques used by the researchers (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Validity is also connected to the agreement across coders, methods, investigations, and researchers (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Inter-coder reliability refers to the degree to which coders agree with each other about how themes are to be applied to qualitative data. Reliability is important in that it indicates that coders are measuring the same thing. Strong inter-coder agreement also suggests that the concept is not just a figment of the investigator's imagination and adds to the likelihood that a theme is also valid (Sandelowski, 1995). Agreement across techniques gives researchers further confidence that appropriate themes have been identified in the same way that finding similar themes across multiple investigations do. Bernard (1994) argued that the validity of a concept depend on the utility of the device that measures it and the collective judgment of the scientific community that a construct and its measure are valid. "Valid measurement makes valid data, but validity itself depends on the collective opinion of researchers" (Bernard, 1994, p. 43). To ensure a satisfactory degree of reliability and construct validity in the coding, the cooperation of at least one other researcher at the beginning stages is widely recommended (Weber, 1990). Independent tests of coding a

single sample of text are likely to reveal a certain level of ambiguity between researchers as to which concepts actually conform to a particular category construct. A resulting revision of the category definitions is likely to eradicate any such ambiguities upon re-testing. Sarantakos (1993) proposes that if at least 80% of the variation is agreed upon between researchers, then the system can be fully operationalized.

Inter-coder Reliability

To establish inter-coder reliability, ten philosophy statements were selected at random using a random number generator. The numbers that were assigned previously to the philosophy statements were used. Two researchers and the principal researcher were used to establish inter-coder reliability. All coders received the same text units to code. The following steps were followed:

Step one: the principal researcher read through all 87 philosophy statements and identified 13 emergent themes. The principal researcher developed a set of themes that formed a checklist of themes. Each of the 13 themes was defined and a codebook was developed. The codebook contained instructions on how the themes were identified and instructions for future coders to follow. The 13 emergent themes were then listed with definitions. A coding sheet was also attached for two outside coders to use for coding purposes.

Step two: two outside coders then read through ten randomly selected philosophy statements. If any of the thirteen emergent themes was identified during reading, the

corresponding box was checked on the coding sheet. Each philosophy statement could have had up to thirteen checked themes.

Step three: the researchers compared notes and reconciled any differences that showed up on their initial codes and themes checklists.

Step four: the researchers used a consolidated checklist to independently apply coding.

Step five: the researchers checked the reliability of the coding (a 90% agreement is suggested; .8 for Cohen's kappa). A Cohen's *kappa* percentage of agreement was calculated. "Cohen's *kappa* assumes nominal-level data and has a typical range from .00 (agreement at chance level) to 1.00 (perfect agreement), and a value of less than 0.00 indicates agreement less than chance" (Neuendorf, 2002, p.150). For further illustration, see Table 3.3.

Table 3.3

Cohen's kappa percentage of agreement (Neuendorf, 2002).

Agreement Level	Cohen's <i>kappa</i> percentage
Poor Agreement	Less than 0.02
Fair Agreement	0.02 – 0.40
Moderate Agreement	0.40 - 0.60
Good Agreement	0.60 – 0.80
Very Good Agreement	0.80 – 1.00

If the level of reliability was not acceptable, then the researchers repeated the previous steps. Once the reliability was established, the coding was applied on a large-scale basis. A periodic quality control check was followed.

Validity and reliability was established through three rounds. *Round one* consisted of the principal researcher reading through all 86 philosophy statements and identifying 13 emergent themes. The themes included: facilitator; present subject matter in multiple modalities; build personal relationships with each student; create a safe, intellectually stimulating learning environment; reflection; enthusiasm; expert in subject matter; role model; organization and clarity; professionalism; provide opportunity to learn; technological integration; and excellent researchers. The 13 themes were defined and organized in a codebook and coding sheet for inter-coder reliability to occur. Inter-coder reliability was conducted with two other researchers. Upon completion of inter-coder reliability, all three researchers then compared results and notes. After lengthy discussion and review, several of the themes were renamed and definitions were refined for explicitness and clarity. One predetermined theme, excellent researchers, was eliminated, as it was agreed upon by all three researchers it was not emergent. Two themes, professionalism and reflection, were collapsed into one theme due to overlap in definition which was renamed, professional teaching commitment, and re-defined. The first round of reliability ended with 11 emergent themes and explicit definitions of each, which included: student centeredness; instructional variability; student rapport; conducive learning environment; professional teaching commitment; enthusiasm; expert in subject matter; role model; organization and clarity; provide opportunity to learn; and

technological integration. A percentage agreement and a Cohen's kappa were calculated (see Table 3.4).

Round two of validity and reliability was conducted after a calculated percentage agreement and Cohen's Kappa for inter-coder reliability was not desirable. Ten new philosophy statements were selected using a random number generator and each researcher read through and coded each statement. Again, identified theme definitions were expanded upon for clarity and agreement. Three steps were established for identifying themes during coding. **Step 1** was to read content. **Step 2** was to identify key words relating back to codebook. **Step 3** was to establish theme and assign. A percentage agreement and a Cohen's Kappa were calculated for each theme (see Table 3.5 and Table 3.6), which was still less than desirable. A third round of reliability was conducted.

Round three of validity and reliability was conducted. Ten randomly selected philosophy statements were distributed to each researcher. Each researcher read and coded the statements. A final review of the results and calculations of percentage agreement and Cohen's Kappa for each theme established the findings to be valid and reliable (see Table 3.5 and Table 3.6).

$$\frac{\text{Total Number of Ratings}}{\text{Number of Agreements}} = \% \text{ Agreement} = \frac{9}{10} = 90 \% \text{ Agreement}$$

Figure 3.4. Example Calculation for Percentage Agreement

Percentage agreement was calculated between the principal researcher and each individual researcher/coder that assisted in the reliability and validity rounds for each theme. The percentage agreement was calculated for each theme between the principal researcher and researcher/coder 1, between principal researcher and researcher/coder 2, and between researcher/coder 1 and researcher/coder 2 (see figure 3.4 and 3.5). The number of ratings for each theme was added respectively to the individual the agreement was being calculated between. The number each researcher could have had was between one and ten. The two numbers were added and divided by two. An overall average of the percentage agreement was then calculated.

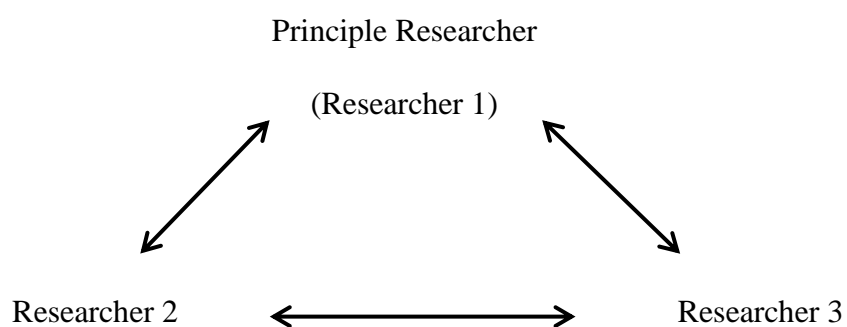


Figure 3.5. Interaction between researchers to calculate percent agreement

An overall average of the percentage agreement was calculated by adding all three percentage agreements from the interactions between researchers, and then divided by three.

Table 3.4

Percentage Agreement and Cohen's kappa Statistic for Reliability in Nominal Theme Identification from Expert Panel in Round I

Identified Themes	Percentage Agreement	Cohen's kappa		
		R1 & R2	R1 & R3	R2 & R3
1. Facilitator	.87	1.00	0.00	0.00
2. Present subject matter in multiple modalities	.73	1.00	0.00	0.00
3. Build personal relationships with each student	.80	1.00	-.15	-.15
4. Create a safe, intellectually stimulating learning environment	.63	.41	.31	.09
5. Reflection	.60	.20	-.17	.20
6. Enthusiasm	.87	.73	.54	.78
7. Expert in subject matter	.60	1.00	0.00	0.00
8. Role model	.73	.54	.40	.40
9. Organization and Clarity	.73	.54	.40	.40
10. Professionalism	.67	.60	.20	.20
11. Provide opportunity to learn	.67	0.00	0.00	-.19
12. Technological integration	.87	.60	.78	.80
13. Excellent Researcher	.60	.04	-.17	.41

*Note*¹: Cohen's kappa of 1.0 is perfect reliability

*Note*²: R1= Researcher One-Sanke; R2=Researcher Two- Ewing; R3= Researcher Three- Foster

Table 3.5

Percentage Agreement in Nominal Theme Identification from Expert Panel in Rounds II and III

Identified Themes	Round II	Round III
1. Student Centeredness	.80	1.00
2. Instructional Variability	1.00	1.00
3. Student rapport	.87	1.00
4. Conducive learning environment	.80	.93
5. Professional Teaching Commitment	.67	.93
6. Enthusiasm	.83	1.00
7. Expert in subject matter	.93	.93
8. Role model	.80	1.00
9. Organization and Clarity	.80	.93
10. Provide opportunity to learn	.73	.93
11. Technological integration	.80	1.00

Table 3.6

Cohen's kappa Statistic for Reliability in Nominal Theme Identification from Expert Panel in Rounds II and III

Identified Themes	Round II			Round III		
	R1 & R2	R1 & R3	R2 & R3	R1 & R2	R1 & R3	R2 & R3
1. Student centeredness	1.00	-.15	-.15	1.00	1.00	1.00
2. Instructional variability	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
3. Student rapport	.73	.54	.78	1.00	1.00	1.00
4. Conducive learning environment	.54	.73	.34	.78	.78	1.00
5. Professional Teaching Commitment	.21	-.08	.09	.61	1.00	.61
6. Enthusiasm	.80	.58	.40	1.00	1.00	1.00
7. Expert in subject matter	.73	.73	1.00	.80	.80	1.00
8. Role model	.37	.37	.37	1.00	1.00	1.00
9. Organization and Clarity	.58	.61	.61	.58	.80	.80
10. Provide opportunity to learn	.20	.78	.40	.61	1.00	.61
11. Technological integration	.60	.73	.40	1.00	1.00	1.00

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The following section will provide details on the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the research study. A qualitative content analysis was used to identify the emergent themes found in the teaching philosophy statements. A quantitative content analysis was utilized to determine the frequency at which the themes occurred throughout the teaching philosophy statements.

Qualitative Content Analysis

The process of qualitative content analysis often begins during the early stages of data collection. Qualitative content analysis involves a set of systematic and distinct procedures for processing data. The steps are listed and described below.

1. Identify a population of documents/arrange data for qualitative content analysis

The population of documents was the teaching philosophy statements of the United States Department of Agriculture Excellence in College and University Teaching in the Food and Agricultural Sciences award recipients from the years 2000 – 2010. A written teaching philosophy statement was a requirement of the award program evaluation criteria for applicants to receive the award. The award winning teaching philosophy statements were submitted in a word document, which was an appropriate format for analysis.

2. *Determine the unit of analysis*

Each philosophy statement was the unit of analysis. Each statement was coded for themes which may be expressed in single words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, or entire documents. The researcher primarily looked for the expression of an idea. Codes were assigned to a chunk of message any size as long as a theme of interest is present.

3. *Select a sample of units from the population*

A census of all the philosophy statements from the award recipients from the years 2000 – 2010 were selected to be analyzed.

4. *Design coding procedures: develop categories and coding scheme*

In traditional content analysis, categories are required to be clearly defined, comprehensive, and mutually-exclusive. The categories were established following some preliminary examination of the data. First, the principal researcher independently reviewed the material and developed a set of themes that formed a checklist of themes. Second, two qualified coders read through ten randomly selected statements and compared notes and reconciled any differences that showed up on their initial checklists. Third, the researchers used a consolidated checklist to independently apply coding. Fourth, the researchers checked the reliability of the coding (a 95% agreement is suggested; .8 for Cohen's kappa). If the level of reliability was not acceptable, then the researchers repeated the previous steps. Once the reliability was established, the coding was applied on a large-scale basis. The final stage was a periodic quality control check.

5. *Code all text*

When sufficient consistency had been achieved, the coding rules were applied to code all text. During the coding process, researchers checked the coding constantly to prevent “drifting into idiosyncratic sense of what the codes mean” (Schilling, 2006).

6. *Reporting*

For the current stage of the study, the themes that emerged from the content analysis were described and reported.

Quantitative Frequency Analysis

A quantitative content analysis approach was used to determine the frequency at which the themes occurred throughout the population of documents. This was accomplished by establishing a spreadsheet in SPSS that will run frequency counts on the themes throughout all the documents analyzed. Analyses of word-counts yield inferences about the frequency of themes in texts. The word count does not imply importance; merely frequencies.

Limitations of Study

In content analysis the researcher should try to have some sort of validation study built into the design. In qualitative research, validation takes the form of triangulation. Triangulation lends credibility to the findings by incorporating multiple sources of data, methods, investigators, or theories (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). With the

study that was conducted, triangulation was a major limitation. In order to cross validate the findings from the content analysis, the award winning professors and students enrolled in the classes of the award winning professors should have been interviewed about the teaching style and practices used in the classroom to get a sense of the extent to which the teaching philosophy statements are truly reflected. Another approach would have been to survey the students of each of the award winning professors regarding the philosophy statements to see the level of agreement between the stated teaching philosophy statement and the actual classroom practices. A third approach would have been to video record the professors teaching and the researchers would examine the degree to which the ideals, beliefs, and values mentioned in the teaching philosophy statement are being implemented in the classroom and during instruction. Shapiro and Markoff (1997) affirm that content analysis itself is only valid and meaningful to the extent that the results are related to other measures.

Another foreseeable limitation was in the methods of conducting the content analysis of the teaching philosophy statements of award winning professors to enhance the utility of the analysis. Two fatal flaws that destroy the utility of a content analysis are faulty definitions of categories and non-mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories.

In biblical studies, the systematic process of asking questions of a text as a way of understanding its meaning is called *exegesis*. Usually seen as part of the wider field of hermeneutics, “interpreting” the meaning of the text in both its original context and in its effect on and application to the reader, formal exegesis often employs a wide variety of critical tools to help readers understand the meaning and intent of the text (Huntsman, 2005). Through this questioning process, readers can better “lead out” (exegesis) the

original meaning without unduly “reading in” (eisegesis) their own preconceived notions (Huntsman, 2005).

Exegesis is the critical study and interpretation of a text, and trying to understand what it meant and how it is applied in its original context. *Eisegesis* is mistakenly reading one’s own context into the text, when it doesn’t actually appear there on its own grounds. *Exegesis* is legitimate interpretation which “reads out of” the text what the original author or authors meant to convey. *Eisegesis*, on the other hand, reads into the text what the interpreter wishes to find or thinks should be found there. It expresses the interpreters own subjective ideas, not the meaning which is in the text. In the content analysis of the teaching philosophy statements of award winning college professors, the researchers performed *exegesis*. The contents of the teaching philosophy statements were studied and interpreted in context of the professors’ teaching process, which included the definitions and interaction between learning and teaching, perceptions of the teacher’s and student’s role, and goals and values of education which allow themes to emerge. The researchers did not express their own subjective ideas; the themes were identified and interpreted in the original meaning and in an objective manner.

Eisegesis may impact the validity and reliability of the results of the content analysis of the teaching philosophy statements of award winning professors. However, steps were established in the data analysis to prevent *eisegesis* from occurring. The reliability of the content analysis was checked periodically to maintain consistency and validity of the emerging themes. As stated above, the teaching philosophy statements were reviewed by two researchers. Both coders received the same units to code. First, the two researchers independently reviewed the material and come up with a set of themes

that formed a checklist of themes. Second, the researchers compared notes and reconciled any differences that showed up on their initial checklists. Third, the researchers used a consolidated checklist to independently apply coding. Fourth, the researchers checked the reliability of the coding (a 95% agreement is suggested; .8 for Cohen's kappa). A Cohen's *kappa* percentage of agreement was calculated. "Cohen's *kappa* assumes nominal-level data and has a normal range from .00 (agreement at chance level) to 1.00 (perfect agreement), and a value of less than 0.00 indicates agreement less than chance" (Neuendorf, 2002, p.150). If the level of reliability was not acceptable, then the researchers repeated the previous steps. Once the reliability was established, the coding was applied on a large-scale basis. The final stage was a periodic quality control check to make sure *eisegesis* did not occur.

There were several advantages and disadvantages to conducting a content analysis. The advantages of the conducted content analysis of the teaching philosophy statement of award winning professors was a direct look at the statements drafted by the professors via text, which conveyed the central aspect of their teaching process. The content analysis of the teaching philosophy statements allowed for both a quantitative and qualitative operation which identified the emergent themes and then determined the frequencies at which they occurred among the entire population of documents. The themes that emerged from the teaching philosophy statements provided valuable teaching and learning insights through analysis of the documents. The content analysis of the teaching philosophy statements can lead to future research where triangulation can occur to develop a deeper understanding of effective teaching to enhance the students'

comprehension and learning process. By performing triangulation, relationships can be analyzed between specific themes, teaching practices, and student cognition.

Disadvantages of conducting a content analysis of the teaching philosophy statements of award winning college professors was that content analysis is extremely time consuming and is subject to increased error if reliability and validity are not consistently monitored. In the study, a disadvantage was not being able to triangulate the data, which would have allowed for more valid findings. Another disadvantage in content analysis was theoretical saturation. Grounded theorists refer to the point at which no new themes are being identified as theoretical saturation (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 188). When and how theoretical saturation is reached, depends on the number of texts and their complexity, as well as on researcher experience and fatigue, and the number of researchers examining the texts. In conducting a content analysis of any type or magnitude, researchers were aware of theoretical saturation and the ability and knowledge of their fellow researchers.

Limitations of the study of conducting a content analysis occurred in the obtainment of the teaching philosophy statements. There were 110 recipients from 2000-2010. Mortality was a factor in obtaining the 110 documents. One recipient of the teaching award had passed away from an untimely death. Another limitation in obtaining the philosophy statement was the unfortunate computer crash experienced by several recipients and having lost and not recovered the original submitted teaching philosophy statement.

Chapter 4 – Findings

The following chapter details the findings from the research study. The first section of the results provides a profile of the award recipients in terms of their biographical, educational and professional experiences (research objective one). The second section of the chapter summarizes the results of the content analysis to identify the emergent themes found in the espoused philosophy statements (research objective two). Direct statements from the philosophy statements are included to reflect how recipients expressed in their own words the identified themes. The final section summarizes the frequency of themes (research objective three).

Profile of Award Recipients

A total of 110 award recipients were contacted to submit their philosophy statement and complete the online demographic survey. Sixty four ($n = 64$) award winners elected to participate in completing the online demographic survey, for an overall response rate of 58.2%. The following results provide a profile of the award recipients in terms of their biographical, educational and professional experiences.

Respondents were 71.4% ($n=45$) male and 28.6% were female. One respondent did not provide a response. Of the sixty four total respondents, sixty three provided a response to the age bracket of which they belonged; 30.2% ($n=19$) were between the ages 51 – 60, 28.6% ($n=18$) were 61 years of age or older, 27.0% ($n=17$) were between the

ages of 41 – 50, and 14.3% (n=9) were between the ages of 31 – 40 years old. The ethnic profile of fifty nine respondents was as follows: 91.5% (n=54) were white, 3.4% (n=2) were black and 5.1% (n=3) were Asian, five respondents did not provide a response.

Table 4.1

Gender, Age, and Ethnic Profile of Demographic Survey Respondents

Demographic Questions	Number of Respondents	Percent
Gender (n=63)		
Male	45	71.4%
Female	18	28.6%
Age (n=63)		
31 – 40 years old	9	14.3%
41 – 50 years old	17	27.0%
51 – 60 years old	19	30.2%
61 years or older	18	28.6%
Ethnic profile (n=59)		
White	54	91.5%
Asian	3	5.1%
Black	2	3.4%

Respondents' professional rank were as follows: 78.1% (n=50) held the professional rank of Full Professor, 17.2% (n=11) were Associate Professor, 1.6% (n=1) were Assistant Professor, 1.6% (n=1) was an Instructor/Lecturer, and 6.3% (n=4) selected "Other" for their current professional rank (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2

Professional Rank of Demographic Survey Respondents

Professional Rank	Percent (n)
Full Professor	78.1 % (n=50)
Associate Professor	17.2% (n=11)
Assistant Professor	1.6% (n=1)
Instructor/Lecturer	1.6% (n=1)
Other	6.3% (n=4)

Sixty three respondents provided the number of undergraduate courses taught, which averaged to be 3.05 per year. One respondent did not provide a response. All sixty four respondents provided the number of graduate courses taught, which averaged to be 1.63 per year.

Sixty one respondents provided their current appointment by percentage of time. It was found that 14.7% (n=9) respondents held a teaching appointment between 5 – 25%. Twenty three respondents, 34.4%, held a teaching appointment between 26 – 50%. A total of 27.8% (n=17) of the respondents held a 51 – 75% teaching appointment. Finally, 19.6% (n=12) of the respondents held a 76 – 100% teaching appointment (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3

Current Teaching Appointment by Percentage Time of the Demographic Survey Respondents

Current Teaching Appointment by Percentage of Time	Percent (n)
5-25% Teaching Appointment	14.7% (n=9)
26-50% Teaching Appointment	34.4% (n=23)
51-75% Teaching Appointment	27.8% (n=17)
76-100% Teaching Appointment	19.6% (n=12)

Respondents were asked to provide the number of years with teaching experience.

The average years of teaching experience was 24.3 years for sixty three respondents.

The recipients taught in fifteen different disciplines. Table 4.4 illustrates the disciplines.

Table 4.4

Disciplines Taught by Award Recipients

Discipline
Agricultural Communications
Agricultural Economics
Agricultural Engineering
Agricultural and Extension Education
Agriculture and Home Economics/Family and Consumer Sciences
Agricultural Law
Agronomy
Animal Science
Entomology
Food Science/Meat Science/Nutrition
Forestry
Horticulture
Plant and Soil Science
Sociology
Wildlife and Fishery Science/Natural Resource Management

Sixty three (n=63) respondents had received a Doctorate of Philosophy at a post-secondary institution. One respondent had received their Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree at a post-secondary institution.

Themes Identified in Teaching Philosophy Statements

A total of 110 award recipients were contacted to submit their philosophy statement and complete the online demographic survey. Eighty six ($n = 86$) award winners elected to participate in the study by providing their teaching philosophy statement, for an overall response rate of 78.2%. At the completion of the validity and reliability stages of the study, eleven emergent themes were identified and operationally defined. The eleven emergent themes and their operational definitions are organized in Table 4.5. The operational definitions consist of key words and phrases that explicitly and clearly illustrate the theme. The key words and phrases feature the voice of the recipients by using the words *they* chose in their writing and by citing sentences and paragraphs as illustrative of a theme. The definitions were included in the codebook to help the researchers during coding for reliability to focus on identifying themes in respect to this study and only this study (see Appendix B). The emergent themes have been grouped and divided into two subsections, General Role of a Faculty Member and Classroom and Laboratory Instruction. Selective direct text from the teaching philosophy statements is included to reflect the themes.

Table 4.5

Identified Emergent Themes and Definitions

Identified Theme	Operational Definition
1. Student Centeredness	encourage collaboration; develop lifelong learners; help students learn to be learners; a desired outcome of students is developing skills for future and career success; empowering students to think and solve problems; refining students' skills in communication, critical thinking and problem solving; analyze, synthesize, apply and evaluate; provoke student reflective thinking; provide intellectual rigor; create enduring understanding
2. Instructional Variability	recognizes and addresses different learning styles of all students; variability; employing various teaching tactics; create learning activities; maximize student learning
3. Build Student Rapport	maintain a level of mutual respect between themselves and the students; effort put into learning the student as an individual; concern for student welfare; enjoy students; relate to students; identify each individual students' strength and weaknesses; accessible; empathize; rewarding students; listening; time and interest given to students; approachable
4. Conducive Learning Environment	safe, intellectually stimulating; positive classroom environment; welcoming; conducive to learning; comfortable
5. Professional Teaching Commitment	engage in activity to improve their teaching; constant improvement of teaching ; be progressive; stay current in instructional and laboratory teaching methods; collaborate with peers; continually update pedagogical knowledge; constantly assess; personal reflection; professional development; purposeful attention to detail on class materials and instruction; methodical; appropriate self-presentation in appearance and speech; honest; businesslike behavior; personal commitment to teaching

(continued)

Table 4.5 Identified Emergent Themes and Definitions (continued)

Identified Theme	Operational Definition
6. Enthusiasm	create interest and excitement; passion for subject matter; personality; fun; enjoyable; entertaining
7. Expert in Subject Matter	provide foundational facts and information; acquisition of knowledge and content material; keep course content current; master of subject matter; incorporates current research in instruction; strength in Pedagogical Content Knowledge
8. Role Model	positive impact; motivating; mentor; challenge students; inspire; encourage; provide time and attention to students; approachable; high expectations; “make a difference”; personal dignity; dedicated; high personal and professional integrity
9. Organization and Clarity	clearly stated learning objectives/goals; effective planning; uses effective principles of instructional design; structured learning; detailed instruction, materials, and activities; clear communication
10. Provide Opportunity to Learn	provide opportunities inside and outside of classroom for student success; stimulate ownership and responsibility in learning; enforce accountability; students show what they know; provide informal and/or formal feedback on student progress; informal and/or formal assessment; unique assignments and utilize student research projects
11. Technological Integration	incorporate technology into courses; use of various communications technology and delivery mechanisms; up to date on educational technologies

General Role as a Faculty Member

This subsection highlights themes that relate to a faculty member's general role as a faculty member. The themes that relate to the general role as a faculty member include: Student Centeredness; Build Student Rapport; Professional Teaching Commitment; and Role Model.

Student Centeredness

Student Centeredness was found to be an emergent theme. Student centeredness was exemplified as an educator that encourages collaboration; develops lifelong learners; helps students learn to be learners; desires students to develop skills for future and career success; empowers students to think and solve problems; refines students' skills in communication, critical thinking and problem solving; encourages students to analyze, synthesize, apply and evaluate; provokes student reflective thinking; provides intellectual rigor; creates enduring understanding. Examples include:

“I believe learning is a lifestyle. As an educator, I strive to lay the foundation of basic material upon which the students will likely build a career. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, I strive to help them learn to be learners, so that they can use their foundation to continue to develop as engineers, technologists, environmental scientists, and contributors to society. The knowledge gained through educational exploration will give them the building blocks, but a

lifestyle of learning will help them to be innovative and adaptive.”

(Philosophy Statement #1)

“I want my students to acquire, apply, and evaluate information and appreciate that this is a process that never really ends. I also want them to experience the satisfaction of using the knowledge that they have gained to help others.” *(Philosophy Statement #4)*

“First, I begin with the premise that the role of a teacher is to stimulate students to be critical and creative thinkers and that the primary purpose of a university education is to provide students with the essential tools to continue thinking and learning after their relatively short time with the university has ended.” *(Philosophy Statement #15)*

“Through my teaching I hope students will become more aware of the world in which we live, learn to think critically and logically, develop skills in observing and assessing natural phenomena, and recognize what they can contribute to their communities and our society. One of the greatest challenges for me is to create situations in which students internalize ideas and concepts, when they create themselves logical ways of seeing problems and discover creative and ethical ways of solving them.” *(Philosophy Statement #29)*

“Therefore, I challenge students to critically and creatively think, apply and use information, analyze issues, and solve problems.” (*Philosophy Statement #33*)

Build Student Rapport

An emergent theme, build student rapport, was also found to be an emergent theme. Build student rapport was defined as a teacher that maintains a level of mutual respect between themselves and the students; effort is put into knowing the student as an individual; shows concern for student welfare; enjoys students; relates to students; identifies each individual students’ strength and weaknesses; accessible; empathizes; rewards students; listens; time and interest is given to students; and approachable.

Examples include:

“My primary reason I chose an academic career is because I enjoy teaching and genuinely care for students’ wellbeing, and I am very much interested in helping students to be successful in their studies. ... Establishing good rapport with students is very important. Toward this goal, I follow an open-door policy, and go the extra mile to help students in every possible way.” (*Philosophy Statement #35*)

“**Personal rapport** – One of the greatest tragedies in the undergraduate experience is having a professor you are afraid of. As an academic

advisor, I hear of these situations from students almost weekly. In addition to my regular, posted office hours, I maintain an open-door policy for students in my classes, my advisees, and others. Students feel free to approach me before and after class, in my office, and even outside the campus. These conversations can be opportunities to explain concepts in a different way or review key terms and advance learning. Or, they might be a time to listen to student concerns and provide support. Some colleagues might say that spending so much time with students doesn't allow me to "get my work done," but I view such interactions as a major part of my work." (*Philosophy Statement #40*)

"I strive to know each student, consider each one to be family, and remind them how fortunate they are to be at the University of Arkansas studying agriculture and the importance of agriculture (weed science) to society. A strong rapport with students encourages them to achieve at higher levels than they would expect because of the personal pride instilled in each." (*Philosophy Statement #46*)

"I believe that as a teacher, this commitment requires a clear, concentrated focus on the student. By this, I mean the following: *Good Teachers Know Their Students; Good Teachers Appreciate Their Students; Good Teachers Challenge Their Students; and Good*

Teachers Reward Their Students. Knowing students implies a sincere interest that goes beyond name recognition. It implies taking extra time to learn about a student's family situation, educational challenges, and goals. Personal interaction with students encourages them to perform because they know someone cares about their efforts." (*Philosophy Statement #50*)

Professional Teaching Commitment

The philosophy statements indicated professional teaching commitment to be an emergent theme. Professional teaching commitment is defined as one who engages in activity to improve their teaching; constantly seeking improvement of teaching; progressive; current in instructional and laboratory teaching methods; collaborates with peers; continually updates pedagogical knowledge; constantly assesses; performs personal reflection; seeks professional development; pays purposeful attention to detail on class materials and instruction; methodical; appropriate self-presentation in appearance and speech; honest; exhibits businesslike behavior; and personal commitment to teaching. Illustrative of this theme were the following quotes from various professors.

"Finally, I am a strong believer in the *scholarship of teaching*. I believe that there is a scientific basis for the craft of teaching and that all professors have a responsibility to remain current on the latest research and applied scholarship in teaching. Further, all professors

should seek to contribute to the scholarship of teaching through personal reflection, participation in campus and disciplinary discussions and workshops, the application of scholarship to their own teaching, and by contributing to the literature on effective teaching. Through such scholarship, professors can improve their own teaching as well as the teaching profession.” (*Philosophy Statement #34*)

“My teaching philosophy and style are continually evolving. I am never satisfied with what I have done so I constantly seek ways to improve.” (*Philosophy Statement #30*)

“I work very diligently at improving my instruction and believe it is my responsibility to continually improve and strengthen my teaching to facilitate student learning. I regularly attend faculty-development seminars, workshops and conferences at the university, regional and national levels.” (*Philosophy Statement #41*)

“I believe that teaching effectively is not a static target, but rather an ever-changing process that must meet the needs of students. As such, I believe it is important to engage in activities to continually develop both my teaching skills and my professional knowledge.” (*Philosophy Statement #12*)

“I strive to continually improve not only the content of the courses I teach, but also my teaching skills. Helping students understand how things work is a joy to me and I want to continue to learn how to do it more and more effectively!” (*Philosophy Statement #42*)

Role Model

Role model was found to be an emergent, emergent theme defined as a teacher who has a positive impact; motivating; a mentor; challenges students; inspires; encourages; provides time and attention to students; approachable; high expectations; “makes a difference”; personal dignity; dedicated; and possesses high personal and professional integrity. As several award winning professors noted:

“I know that whether I like it or not, I am a role model, and I too need to tow the line and lead an exemplary life with ethics, as well as passion and compassion for what my professional assignments demands.” (*Philosophy Statement #25*)

“Finally, teachers are role models for their students. I value this responsibility and wholeheartedly desire to be an outstanding role model for my students. I love to teach; moreover I love to help people learn!” (*Philosophy Statement #42*)

“Finally, I hope to serve as a role model for my students so that they learn, recognize, and understand the basic teaching/learning model that I use in my classes.” (*Philosophy Statement #57*)

“Just as I have high expectations for my performance in the classroom, I expect my students to put forth an effort as well. By having high expectations for my students, it challenges them to stretch beyond their comfort zone. This provides them the opportunity to gain a better understanding of their capabilities in a safe environment. However, I can only expect as much effort out of my students as I am willing to invest in the course for them.” (*Philosophy Statement #70*)

“As a teacher, it is my job to stimulate and encourage thinking rather than to provide answers and resolve problems. It is my obligation to give students professional competency, energy, demand of excellence, and fair treatment. It is my job to touch lives and challenge them to learn how to use their inherent capabilities and their knowledge base to resolve problems for themselves.” (*Philosophy Statement #74*)

Classroom and Laboratory Instruction

This subsection highlights themes that relate to Classroom and Laboratory Instruction. The themes that relate to classroom and laboratory instruction include:

Instructional Variability; Conducive Learning Environment; Enthusiasm; Expert in Subject Matter; Organization and Clarity; Provide Opportunity to Learn; and Technological Integration.

Instructional Variability

Instructional variability was defined as recognizes and addresses different learning styles of all students; variability; employing various teaching tactics; create learning activities; and maximize student learning. As instructional variability emerged as an emergent theme, the following examples provide an illustration of award winning professors' voice in instructional variability.

“I use several active learning strategies in the classroom to accomplish my goal. First, I attempt to motivate students to understand course material and gain their interest by linking academics to “real-world” scenarios. I often use role playing exercises to demonstrate the relevancy of course material to students, which in turn inspires them to learn. Second, I strongly advocate experiential or “hands-on” learning in my courses, which challenges students to learn by example.”

(Philosophy Statement #49)

“As an educator, I see my role as a facilitator of student learning. I use a variety of pedagogies (lecture, discussion, problem-based learning,

peer teaching, collaborative learning groups, demonstration, and laboratory (and field) experience) to promote learning and retention of basic content and disciplinary principles along with the development of critical thinking skills.” (*Philosophy Statement #31*)

“I believe that students are exposed to modern technology on an hourly basis and are entertained daily by bright lights, flashing symbols, loud music - - and that classroom teachers are expected to offer the stimulation during class sessions. Variability is accomplished through using discussion-method teaching techniques; systematically arranging the furniture in the learning environment is conducive to engaging students in the content. Role playing adds variability to the classroom and encourages students to engage the content at higher cognitive levels. Effectively using a variety of visuals such as colorful overhead imagery, PowerPoint, handouts, and live webcasting promotes change-of-pace and thus, interest and motivation. Moving students in and out of their seats to the classroom writing surface, overhead, or computer station helps them remain physically alert, and therefore, more mentally alert. Variability often translates into creative presentations which are fun and exciting for students.” (*Philosophy Statement #7*)

“Although my courses include lecture periods, I believe students need to be involved beyond the role of a “passive learner,” sitting at a desk,

taking notes, and simply providing memorized facts on an examination. I continually include and seek new ways to engage students in active learning, such as educational assignments, classroom activities, and laboratory exercises. Examples of these assignments include problem-solving exercises / case-studies, developing and writing communications for an intended audience that include peer-review to resemble real-world practice, position-paper development, presentation and debate, interviewing and visiting growers and professionals, independent student research projects, hands-on assignments in laboratories, developing skills in areas of student's keen personal horticultural interest, discussing critical and ethical issues facing horticulture, and enhancing student global awareness by learning about cultures and agricultural methods of the world." (*Philosophy Statement #41*)

Conducive Learning Environment

A conducive learning environment was an emergent theme threaded throughout the philosophy statements. A conducive learning environment was defined as safe: intellectually stimulating; positive classroom environment; welcoming; conducive to learning; and comfortable.

“...A class climate that encompasses care, compassion and creativity while also challenging learners to be critical thinkers.” (*Philosophy Statement #22*)

“Teaching not only involves the act of conveying knowledge but also the creation of an environment that is conducive to learning. There are a number of facets to this environment, some of which are relatively easy to define, while others are less tangible. First, there is a set of technical skills that are essential for the effective delivery of information. These involve clarity of organization as well as skills in designing, sequencing and presenting experiences which induce learning. They also include skills in developing the tools and procedures for assessing the quality of learning that has occurred. Taken together, this set of skills can be learned. I do not subscribe to the idea that there are "naturally gifted" teachers. Teaching is hard work, but most facets of it can be learned with a little help from others.” (*Philosophy Statement #36*)

“I strive to create a safe, non-threatening, and supportive environment for all students to learn.” (*Philosophy Statement #41*)

“I believe that the success of students depends in part on active learning in an enjoyable setting. The fun I have in my work as instructor affects

the students' response to the teaching-learning environment.”

(Philosophy Statement #52)

Enthusiasm

For the study, enthusiasm was an attribute held by teachers that were able to create interest and excitement; hold a passion for subject matter; personable; fun; enjoyable; and entertaining. The following examples illustrate the role enthusiasm plays in teaching and developing a teaching philosophy statement.

“I believe there is no magic formula for good teaching. It requires passion for and commitment to learning, as well as enthusiasm for students and an open creative mind. It requires being willing to do whatever it takes to have learning happen.” *(Philosophy Statement #27)*

“I get very excited about teaching; once I am done preparing notes, I cannot wait to deliver the lectures. I have a great enthusiasm for teaching, which gets students excited in learning.” *(Philosophy Statement #35)*

“I love what I do!” *(Philosophy Statement #45)*

“**Enthusiasm:** Second most important trait after desire, really helps motivate students, keeps their interest, improves class attendance, fosters learning in subtle ways, a little show biz in lecture or lab really helps.”
(Philosophy Statement #53)

“**Enthusiasm:** Enthusiasm is contagious. Enthusiasm is the spark that ignites action learning. Enthusiasm starts the class, shapes the class and makes learning happen. When you’re enthusiastic it sends a clear message to the students that you care about them and the class. When you care, they care. Enthusiasm is extremely important to my philosophy on the role of teaching.” *(Philosophy Statement 82)*

Expert in Subject Matter

Provide foundational facts and information; acquisition of knowledge and content material; keep course content current; master of subject matter; incorporates current research in instruction; strength in Pedagogical Content Knowledge are the key words and phrases used to define expert in subject matter for the study.

“My goals as a teacher-scholar are to be knowledgeable, scientifically acute, and excited about the subjects and classes I *get* to teach.”
(Philosophy Statement #16)

“I believe that effective teaching starts with a solid foundation of theory and concept.” (*Philosophy Statement #72*)

“Possession of information to be shared with others is the first prerequisite for teaching.” (*Philosophy Statement #73*)

“I believe it is important for teachers to remain current regarding content and technique.” (*Philosophy Statement #75*)

“I teach and conduct research in the area that I love and have a passion for- land and water resources engineering and environmental protection. I teach topics of interactions of hydrology (water cycle) with lands, plants, and humans – minimizing degradation of our natural resources to provide a sustainable environment. I have developed an integrated teaching, research and outreach program for knowledge and technology transfer. On a regular basis, I share with my students the current status of knowledge in the area of my research and related fields. Students love to hear about what I do other than teaching. I strongly believe that relevant subject matter must be taught so that students can understand the information and gain knowledge within their learning styles and connect with the information intellectually.” (*Philosophy Statement #78*)

Organization and Clarity

Organization and clarity emerged as an emergent theme as the following key words and phrases appeared consistently throughout the teaching philosophy statements: clearly stated learning objectives/goals; effective planning; uses effective principles of instructional design; structured learning; detailed instruction, materials, and activities; and clear communication. The following selected text provides examples of organization and clarity.

“Organization – One of the best ways I can help students learn is to be well organized in my classroom presentations and thus, help students to organize the material they are trying to learn. For each topic, I provide students with a set of review questions – open-ended questions that require students to pull together information from lecture and reading assignments. By answering these questions, students organize their notes and readings into key elements, and prepare themselves for the exams.” (*Philosophy Statement #40*)

“I believe that when a professor purposefully chooses and employs a particular method or technique of teaching, it makes the content, at once, simpler for the learner to grasp. A master teacher possesses the capacity and ability to take the very complex and make it simple. Clarity must be present in the obvious organization and thus natural

flow of the course content. Clarity can also be evident in the structured format of a course and the structure of each class session; both must be well-thought and detailed. Preplanned lead questions and masterfully planned interim summaries lend themselves to evidences of clarity. These techniques offer application to that which has been heard and provide staging for that which will be discussed. Clarity is enhanced by stating or writing the day's objectives on the board, and by using interest approaches or other types of "opening-class-anticipatory-set" to persuade students that the information about to be discussed is important and necessary." (*Philosophy Statement #7*)

"At the basic level, my approach to teaching begins with the necessity of presenting clear objectives and expectations at the onset of the course and providing current lab and lecture material throughout the semester." (*Philosophy Statement #39*)

"The learning process is facilitated when students are provided with well-designed, current, and professionally-looking class handouts and comprehensive publication-quality laboratory exercise handouts. I believe that the credibility of an instructor as a positive role model, and the importance and relevance of the information presented, are lessened in the minds of students when instructional materials are poorly prepared." (*Philosophy Statement #24*)

Provide Opportunity to Learn

The theme, provide opportunity to learn, was found to be an emergent theme. Provide opportunity to learn is defined as: provide opportunities inside and outside of classroom for student success; stimulate ownership and responsibility in learning; enforce accountability; students show what they know; provide informal and/or formal feedback on student progress; informal and/or formal assessment; unique assignments and utilize student research projects. Examples listed below provide insight on the theme present in the teaching philosophy statements.

“In addition to innovative delivery, Dr. _____ has created assignments that enhance problem-solving skills, and concept mapping assignments are used to encourage students to make connections and look at information in new ways.” (*Philosophy Statement #56*)

“I emphasize active learning both in and out of the classroom. For example, in *HDFS 425: Critical Family Transitions*, students actively engage the material by applying it to their own families and to families in popular media. More specifically, students complete a family genogram project in which they examine three generations of their family and apply course concepts and theories to understand dynamics in their own family system. They then apply what they have learned to fictional families in films. By actively applying the course material in

this way, students learn how they can transfer the material they have learned in class to their professional lives. This approach also helps students make connections between what they are learning in the classroom to their personal lives outside the classroom.” (*Philosophy Statement #77*)

“In keeping with my belief that students learn by active engagement with the subject matter, I regularly punctuate my lecture classes with in-class problems and group activities, writing assignments, demonstrations, and question and answer sessions. My goal is to have at least two meaningful activities (other than lecture) each 50 minute class period. In addition to stimulating thinking, these activities provide a change-of-pace, encourage student discussion of the subject matter, allow students to gauge their level of understanding, and encourage student attendance. Again, I am convinced that students must take hold of information, wrestle with it, and apply it before it becomes meaningful to them.” (*Philosophy Statement #34*)

Technological Integration

The last emergent theme found in the content analysis of the teaching philosophy statements was technological integration. The definition used to identify the theme was: incorporates technology into courses; uses various communications technology and

delivery mechanisms; and stays up to date on educational technologies. The following quotes illustrate technological integration.

“Students learn technical writing skills such as writing for a specific audience, practice appropriate grammar and punctuation, gain knowledge of horticultural technical matter in areas of keen interest to the students, practice real-world skills in public speaking and presentation format, and utilize computer technology (word processing, graphics, PowerPoint® and desktop publishing).” (*Philosophy Statement #41*)

“I have incorporated the use of technology into all of my courses. All of my courses use WebCT. I fully utilize computer-generated animations provided by publishers in my courses. I have developed some ‘computer enhancements’ to further teach concepts in my NFS 1020 course.” (*Philosophy Statement #45*)

“Communications technology and delivery mechanisms have offered both opportunities and challenges to the 21st century classroom teachers. Today, teachers face a different pool of students who are computer savvy and who are very receptive to the use of the internet. Teachers have to take advantage of these opportunities to tailor their course content and delivery to the ever changing technological

advancement in delivery methods and techniques. In the last three years, I have used a variety of methods and techniques. For example, I use ANGEL, an electronic course management system at Penn State that provides opportunities to use the internet for all classroom activities.” (*Philosophy Statement #57*)

Emergent Themes

The final section summarizes the frequency of themes. Eleven themes emerged from the teaching philosophy statements. Table 4.6 exhibits the eleven themes and the frequency at which they occurred throughout the 86 teaching philosophy statements obtained for the research study. The three emergent themes that were the most common were student centeredness, provide opportunity to learn, and a tie for the third most commonly occurring theme was instructional variability and expert in subject matter. The three emergent themes that were the least common were conducive learning environment, organization and clarity, and technological integration.

Table 4.6

Frequency at which Emergent Themes Occurred Throughout Philosophy Statements

Emergent Theme	Number of Philosophy Statements Analyzed	Number of Philosophy Statements with Theme Present	Percent
1. Student Centeredness	86	81	94.2%
2. Instructional Variability	86	66	76.7%
3. Build Student Rapport	86	63	73.3%
4. Conducive Learning Environment	86	40	46.5%
5. Professional Teaching Commitment	86	63	73.3%
6. Enthusiasm	86	61	71.0%
7. Expert in Subject Matter	86	66	76.7%
8. Role Model	86	57	66.3%
9. Organization and Clarity	86	44	51.2%
10. Provide Opportunity to Learn	86	70	81.4%
11. Technological Integration	86	48	55.8%

Chapter 5 – Conclusions, Recommendations, Implications

Many researchers (Sanders & Horn, 1994; Medley & Mitzel, 1963; Marzano, 2003) indicate that one of the most prominent factors in student achievement is teacher quality. Andrews et al. (1996) noted that “excellence in teaching is complex and difficult to achieve. It is about content expertise and methodological technique, as well as about participants in the educational enterprise valuing and achieving quality outcomes” (p. 101). Past research has identified characteristics of excellent post-secondary teaching (Rosenshine & Furst, 1971; Feldman, 1989; Dunkin & Precians, 1992; Lowman, 1996; Hativa, Barak, & Simhi, 2001; Sherman, Armistead, Fowler, Barksdale, & Reif, 1987). Understanding the teaching characteristics of award winning colleges of agriculture professors, espoused in their teaching philosophy statement, is critical to improving the teaching and learning process.

The purpose of the descriptive research was to identify emergent themes present in the teaching philosophy statements of the United States Department of Agriculture Excellence in College and University Teaching in the Food and Agricultural Sciences award recipients. To accomplish that purpose, the following research objectives guided the study:

1. Identify the biographical, educational background, and professional experience profile of award recipients from 2000 – 2010.
2. Identify via content analysis emergent themes in the espoused philosophy statements of award recipients.

3. Describe frequency of emergent themes identified in the teaching philosophy statements of the award recipients.

Objective 1: Biographical, Educational Background, and Professional Experience Profile of Award Recipients

The biographical, educational background and professional experience was collected from an online demographic survey. Results showed sixty four ($n = 64$) award winners elected to participate in completing the online demographic survey, for an overall response rate of 58.2%.

Conclusions

Award recipients are uniform and monocultural in regards to ethnicity, gender, age and experience. The researcher acknowledges that the demographic survey presents current characteristics of the 2000-2010 award recipients as opposed to the demographics when award winners received the award.

Implications

In a 2003-04 report released by the National Center for Education Statistics teaching faculty in the career teaching field of Agriculture and Natural Resources were profiled. The demographic survey found the typical faculty population to be 78.1% male, 90.3% white, with an average age of 49.8 (National Center for Education Statistics,

2004). The question must be raised regarding whether or not the award recipient profile is congruent with the current faculty demographic profile in colleges of agriculture. The question is: are all demographic groups being represented equally? If not, why? There is also an implication that teaching excellence awards generally come later in a professor's career.

Recommendations

Award program managers should make every effort to ensure that under-represented populations are aware of the award program and are provided the professional development necessary to complete the application process. Further research is recommended for a comparison of demographic profile of award winners to college of agriculture faculty profiles to university faculty profiles to general population demographic profiles. Additionally, further research is recommended to investigate reasons for those discrepancies identified.

Objective 2: Emergent Themes in the Espoused Philosophy Statements of Award Recipients

Exemplary teachers possess universal effective teaching characteristics (Havita, Barak, & Simhi, 2001; Lowman, 1996). Effective teaching begins with the development of a teaching philosophy, a representation of the personal theory that educators construct guide student learning (Schonwetter, Sokal, Friesen, & Taylor, 2002). Teaching philosophy statements can be defined as written statements narrating the teacher's beliefs

and theories about teaching and student learning (Fitzmaurice & Coughlan, 2007). “By writing explicit teaching philosophies, teachers can understand why they teach the way they do and the goals and beliefs that underpin their practice” (Fitzmaurice & Coughlan, 2007, p. 40).

Conclusions

Eleven emergent themes were identified and operationally defined.

Implications

Sherman, et al. (1987) purported that teaching excellence occurs when instructors can focus on understanding the sequence and the characteristics of development of excellent teachers to become one themselves. Importance lies in recognizing the significance of understanding teaching methodologies and the student learning process. All educators have an instructional approach. Fitzmaurice and Coughlan (2007) stressed the importance of post-secondary teachers to examine their beliefs and attitudes to formulate a concept of higher education that goes beyond classroom competency and emphasizes teaching both as a pedagogical and moral activity. The eleven emergent themes exemplify traits that encompass excellent teaching and effective teaching characteristics. There is concern that while “keywords” may be used in a philosophy statement to indicate a theme, could the instructor identify that concept in action? For

example, would all professors know student-centeredness when they saw it and have a similar operational definition of the concept?

Recommendations

A statement of teaching philosophy is a narrative description of one's idea of teaching, including the underpinning of one's teaching methods. A teaching philosophy statement is an avenue to voice holistic views of the teaching process, which includes the definitions and interaction between learning and teaching, perceptions of the teacher's and student's role, and goals and values of education (Chism, 1998; Goodyear & Allchin, 1998). All university teaching faculty should create a teaching philosophy statement and strive to implement their written goals and beliefs into their actual teaching practice. To ensure that all faculty members have an effective instructional philosophy statement, the researcher recommends that professional development be provided to faculty members in colleges of agriculture across the nation on the mechanics of composing a philosophy statement and the implications in actual instructional practice. When teaching faculty integrate teaching characteristics that have been found to be effective, quality teaching will promote and enhance student learning. The eleven emergent themes found in the study included: Student Centeredness, Instructional Variability, Build Student Rapport, Conducive Learning Environment, Professional Teaching Commitment, Enthusiasm, Expert in Subject Matter, Role Model, Organization and Clarity, Provide Opportunity to Learn, and Technological Integration.

Sherman et al. (1987) noted in the results of their study that whether students rated teachers on a pre-prepared list of characteristics using a Likert scale, generated their own list of characteristics of teaching excellence or teachers were interviewed, the same five excellent teaching characteristics appeared. These characteristics were enthusiasm, clarity, attention to preparation/organization, ability to stimulate interest and thinking about the subject matter, and love of knowledge. Feldman (1997) found that students placed high importance on the characteristics: clarity, stimulation of interest in the course, preparation/organization of the course, and motivation of students, in identifying good teaching. Students placed moderate importance on sensitivity to, and concern with class level and progress, knowledge of the subject, enthusiasm for the subject, and availability.

Research studies contribute to understanding the perceived attributes of excellent teachers, however, they have had limited influence on improving the practice of less experienced university teachers. Identifying the elements of excellent university teaching has not shed light on *how* university teachers develop these attributes. Future research should investigate the characteristics of award winning teaching faculty and use these findings to address teaching development needs of less experienced or novice teaching faculty.

Objective 3: Frequency of Emergent Themes

Sherman, Armistead, Fowler, Barksdale, and Reif (1987) identify five characteristics that have been attributed to college instructors selected as excellent: enthusiasm, clarity, preparation/organization, stimulating, and love of knowledge. In the research study, eleven themes emerged and were identified as emergent themes. The eleven themes include: Student Centeredness, Instructional Variability, Build Student Rapport, Conducive Learning Environment, Professional Teaching Commitment, Enthusiasm, Expert in Subject Matter, Role Model, Organization and Clarity, Provide Opportunity to Learn, and Technological Integration. The frequency at which they occurred throughout the 86 teaching philosophy statements obtained for the research study was calculated.

Conclusion

The three emergent themes that were the most common were student centeredness, provide opportunity to learn, and a tie for the third most common theme was expert in subject matter and instructional variability. The three emergent themes that were the least common were a conducive learning environment, organization and clarity, and technological integration.

Implications

All eleven emergent themes are found to be characteristics of excellent teachers. If teaching faculty members are not espousing certain themes in their philosophy statement, then there is a possibility they are not practicing such characteristics in the classroom. A healthy combination of all themes in a classroom will promote student learning and in essence overall student achievement. If a teacher lacks any of the characteristics, student achievement could be affected. Each theme illustrates specific behaviors instructors can adopt to better the teaching and learning experience. There is a possibility that the professional development received in instructional practice could impact what themes are emphasized in the philosophy statements.

Recommendations

Further research should be conducted to inventory what professional development is provided to faculty members in colleges of agriculture across the nation. Once the amount of a professional development is determined, research should be conducted to provide empirical evidence to the professional development format and topic that provides the greatest gains in student achievement. The need for developing metrics to measure student gains and/or outcomes, while common in secondary education, is rapidly advancing to post-secondary education. How can student success be determined?

Additionally, there is a possibility of a disconnect between espoused philosophy and actual practices. Thus, research is recommended to create methods to measure the effective teaching characteristics in classroom practice. By capturing the teacher in

action of how they are carrying out their espoused teaching philosophy, professional development personnel on college campuses could develop teaching improvement workshops, seminars, and in-services to teaching faculty based on effective teaching practices and how to implement them into one's teaching. Roche and Marsh (2000) purport that researchers and practitioners agree that teaching is complex and consists of multiple dimensions. Future research must pay more attention to the complexity of teaching when attempting to further our understanding of university-level teaching. Often times, research universities expect faculty members to produce and disseminate research, which means that they are not often trained in effective instruction. The concern lies with supporting those new faculty members who strive to become excellent teachers. The importance of understanding how teaching faculty learn to teach and the examination of what teachers say and what they do in the university classroom will help develop research that can lead to improved and quality teaching at the post-secondary level.

Summary

Many researchers (Sanders & Horn, 1994; Medley & Mitzel, 1963; Marzano, 2003) indicate that one of the most prominent factors in student achievement is teacher quality. Importance lies in recognizing the significance of understanding teaching methodologies and the student learning process.

Future research must pay more attention to the complexity of teaching when attempting to further our understanding of university-level teaching. Research studies contribute to understanding the perceived attributes of excellent teachers, however they

have had limited influence on improving the practice of less experienced university teachers. Identifying the elements of excellent university teaching has not shed light on *how* university teachers develop these attributes. Future research should investigate the characteristics of award winning teaching faculty and use these findings to address teaching development needs of less experienced or novice teaching faculty.

Research universities expect faculty members to produce and disseminate research, which means that they are not often trained in effective instruction. The concern lies with supporting those new faculty members who strive to become excellent teachers. The importance of understanding how teaching faculty learn to teach and the examination of what teachers espouse in their teaching philosophy statement and their actual teaching practices in the university classroom will help develop research that can lead to improved and quality teaching at the post-secondary level.

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Appendix A - Demographic Survey

**College of Agricultural and Life Sciences Award Winners for Excellent Teaching
An Online Demographic Survey**

1. Please circle one of the following that best describes your current professional rank?

- Instructor/Lecturer
- Assistant Professor
- Associate Professor
- Professor
- Visiting Professor
- Other (Please specify)_____

2. How many courses are you currently teaching this academic year?

Undergraduate Courses _____ Graduate Courses _____

3. Please specify your academic discipline.

4. Please describe your educational background. Using the lines provided, please list your degrees and the institution at which the degree was completed beginning with the most recent. (Additional space provided below if needed)

- _____
- _____
- _____

5. Please indicate years of teaching experience (Include Secondary and Postsecondary Institutions):

At current institution _____ At previous institution(s) _____

6. Please circle the institutional factors that influence your teaching practices. (Please circle all that apply)
- Departmental curriculum committee
 - Class size
 - Moral support from colleagues
 - Departmental support
 - History of how the course has been taught
 - Textbook
 - Instructional time
 - Resources (e.g. technology)
 - Other (Please specify)_____
7. Please circle the personal factors that identify with your teaching practices.(Please circle all that apply)
- Teaching style
 - Student expectations
 - Time to prepare
 - My experience as a student
 - Professional standards from organizations
 - My experience as a teacher
 - Other (Please specify)_____
8. Gender (Please circle one)
- Male
 - Female
9. Age (Please circle one)
- 25 – 30
 - 31 – 40
 - 41 – 50
 - 51 –60
 - 61 and over

10. Ethnicity (Please circle one)

- White
- Black
- American Indian
- Alaska Native
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian
- Other Pacific Islander
- Other – Please specify:

Appendix B - Sankey's Content Analysis Codebook

Sankey's Content Analysis Codebook (2011)

This codebook is designed to help you in the process of coding teaching philosophy statements. Each theme is defined based on its emerged presence in multiple teaching philosophy statement and its use in this study. You are to refer to these definitions while coding your philosophy statements. In addition, you are to code the philosophy statements based on the instructions that follow. You may have previous experience in research or coding but because each study is different you are to code only according to these instructions.

Instructions:

This is a study of the emergent themes found in the teaching philosophy statements of award winning College of Agriculture professors. The study is looking for what different themes are present in the teaching philosophy statements and the frequency at which the emergent themes occur. Your job here is to read the teaching philosophy statements and identify words or phrases as certain themes. After identifying the themes, you will code the statements on the corresponding code sheet. **You know you have found a theme when you can answer the question, What is this expression an example of?**

In section one of this codebook you will find a list of words and definitions. These words are the themes in this study; the definitions are the applications of the themes in this study. The themes emerged from the data through a preliminary constant comparison method, which involved the principal investigator searching for similarities and differences in the teaching philosophy statements by making systematic comparisons across the statements. Your first duty is to familiarize yourself with the themes and their definitions. Do this by reading through the list a few times, asking questions if you do not understand the definition. Remember that these may not be the definitions that you are most familiar with associated with the themes, so pay close attention.

After some definitions you will find specific instructions for coding that theme. If no specific instructions are offered follow the basic instructions found here.

Basic instructions:

1. Read each philosophy statement completely.
 2. Read each philosophy statement a second time. This time you will pay attention for the existence of the listed themes. Be careful, these themes may be found in words, phrases or even abbreviations. **You know you have found a theme when you can answer the question, What is this expression an example of?** As you find themes mark them on the code sheet. As you identify themes in the philosophy statement, place a check mark in the box corresponding to the identified theme. Please be sure fill out all respective areas at the top of the code sheet (i.e. philosophy statement identification number).
-

Identified Themes and Definitions

1. **Student Centeredness** - encourage collaboration; develop lifelong learners; help students learn to be learners; a desired outcome of students is developing skills for future and career success; empowering students to think and solve problems; refining students' skills in communication, critical thinking and problem solving; analyze, synthesize, apply and evaluate; provoke student reflective thinking; provide intellectual rigor; create enduring understanding
2. **Instructional Variability** - recognizes and addresses different learning styles of all students; variability; employing various teaching tactics; create learning activities; maximize student learning
3. **Build Student Rapport** - maintain a level of mutual respect between themselves and the students; effort put into learning the student as an individual; concern for student welfare; enjoy students; relate to students; identify each individual students' strength and weaknesses; accessible; empathize; rewarding students; listening; time and interest given to students; approachable
4. **Conducive Learning Environment** - safe, intellectually stimulating; positive classroom environment; welcoming; conducive to learning; comfortable
5. **Professional Teaching Commitment** - engage in activity to improve their teaching; constant improvement of teaching ; be progressive; stay current in instructional and laboratory teaching methods; collaborate with peers; continually update pedagogical knowledge; constantly assess; personal reflection; professional development; purposeful attention to detail on class materials and instruction; methodical; appropriate self-presentation in appearance and speech; honest; businesslike behavior; personal commitment to teaching
6. **Enthusiasm** – create interest and excitement; passion for subject matter; personality; fun; enjoyable; entertaining
7. **Expert in subject matter** – provide foundational facts and information; acquisition of knowledge and content material; keep course content current; master of subject matter; incorporates current research in instruction; strength in Pedagogical Content Knowledge
8. **Role model** – positive impact; motivating; mentor; challenge students; inspire; encourage; provide time and attention to students; approachable; high expectations; “make a difference”; personal dignity; dedicated; high personal and professional integrity
9. **Organization and Clarity** – clearly stated learning objectives/goals; effective planning; uses effective principles of instructional design; structured learning; detailed instruction, materials, and activities; clear communication
10. **Provide opportunity to learn** – provide opportunities inside and outside of classroom for student success; stimulate ownership and responsibility in learning; enforce accountability; students show what they know; provide informal and/or formal feedback on student progress; informal and/or formal assessment; unique assignments and utilize student research projects
11. **Technological integration** – incorporate technology into courses; use of various communications technology and delivery mechanisms; up to date on educational technologies

Coding Form for Teaching Philosophy Statements Content Analysis
Coder _____

Philosophy Statement Identification Number											TOTAL
1. Student Centeredness											
2. Instructional Variability											
3. Build Student Rapport											
4. Conducive Learning Environment											
5. Professional Teaching Commitment											
6. Enthusiasm											
7. Expert in subject matter											
8. Role model											
9. Organization and Clarity											
10. Provide opportunity to learn											
11. Technological integration											