To Improve the Academy

1985

Part III: Introduction

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INTRODUCTION

The essays contained in this section of the book deal with teaching and learning in a direct and uncomplicated fashion. We expect that you will copy some of them to distribute to faculty and students; others you may want to modify to fit the particular needs of your institution. Or you may just want to carry away some good ideas to try out in your own classroom.

LuAnn Wilkerson's essay starts off the section with a consideration of the principles lying behind effective clinical education. Like the other authors who have contributed to this section, she builds her paper on an extensive body of research on teaching and learning. Thus, although she intends her remarks for medical school faculty, her suggestions apply equally well to those teaching in non-clinical settings. In her essay, "It Ain't Necessarily So," Marilla Svinicki tackles what is probably the most popular form of instruction in all educational settings, the lecture. It is particularly easy, she hints, for the lecturer, who is giving a solo performance with little or no assistance from students, to forget all about learning research. Reminding

faculty of the need to review their assumptions about their students and how they learn, Svinicki gives helpful pointers for planning lectures. Both Wilkerson and Svinicki strike a common chord—no matter what the setting is, no matter what approach has been chosen, we must always remember how students hear, process and structure information, think about it, and apply it if we are to be effective teachers.

Robert Pierlioni addresses particular student needs that may not be immediately obvious to the instructor. He suggests that students may not be "learning" because they do not know how to manage their time or how to study for tests and exams. Although Pierlioni works with health professions students and has developed these handouts for them, we suspect his sensible recommendations would be useful for other undergraduates as well.

In the final part of section three, we have gathered materials prepared by University of Rhode Island faculty for a workshop called "Teaching Students to Think." Bette Erickson's introduction reminds us explicitly that the purpose of education is to teach students how to think critically and creatively and how to solve problems, rather than how to regurgitate information that they have heard in class or read in their textbooks. She explains how you might plan a similar workshop for your campus and offers advice based on experience at the University of Rhode Island. At the end of the section are examples of papers presented by the University of Rhode Island faculty at these workshops. They are filled with stimulating ideas to try out in the classroom and would make excellent handouts for faculty members.