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# Preparing and Fostering Learner-Centered Faculty

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## Guiding Principles for Learner-Centered Teachers

When instruction is learner-centered, teachers take on a facilitative, guiding role. According to Maryellen Weimer, author of *Learner-Centered Teaching*, faculty “position themselves alongside the learner and keep the attention, focus, and spotlight aimed at and on the learning process.” Weimer advocates that learner-centered teachers adopt an approach that is guided by the following seven principles:

### **1. Teachers do learning tasks less.**

Teachers must stop always doing the learning tasks of organizing the content, generating the examples, asking the questions, answering the questions, summarizing the discussion, solving problems, constructing the diagrams, etc.

### **2. Teachers do less telling; students do more discovering.**

We tell students everything. We do a demonstration, and we tell students what we are going to do; when we have done it, we tell them what happened. We tell students to do the reading and what parts of it are important...what is there left for students to figure out for themselves? Are all these messages necessary? Do we know for sure that they promote learning? Do we know how they affect student attitudes toward learning?

### **3. Teachers do more design work.**

Activities and assignments become the vehicles by and through which learning occurs. The most effective ones accomplish one or more of the following goals: (1) they take students from their current knowledge and skill level and move them to a new place of competence; (2) they motivate student involvement and participation; (3) they involve students in doing authentic and legitimate work of the discipline; and (4) they develop content knowledge and learning skills and awareness.

### **4. Teachers do more modeling.**

How do you as a skillful learner approach learning tasks? What goes through your mind? What mystified you—and how did you figure it out? Share your reflections, including what did and did not help you. Students need to see examples of how learning is hard, messy work even for experienced learners.

### **5. Teachers do more to get students learning from and with each other.**

Research establishes the value of students working together. Like every other instructional method, good group learning experiences do not happen automatically. They are more likely to occur when faculty attend to (1) group dynamics and (2) the design of group tasks and structures.

### **6. Teachers work to create climates for learning.**

Creating activities and events that move students steadily toward a place of intellectual maturity and responsibility is key in learner-centered teaching. Students need to find the motivation and learn how to take responsibility for their own learning. That motivation is not something a teacher can force or require, but research has shown that certain kinds of learning climates foster it.

### **7. Teachers do more with feedback.**

Grading responsibilities remain intact in learner-centered environments, but what changes is the focus of those efforts. Evaluation events are used in ways that maximize their learning potential. More time, energy, and creativity are devoted to finding and using mechanisms that allow the constructive delivery of feedback to students.

These seven principles combine to form an approach to teaching that moves the teacher from the center of the classroom. If followed, these principles will help teachers serve as facilitator, resource person, mentor, instructional designer and master learner.

*This material was summarized by Joyce Weinsheimer from pages 80-91 of *Learner-Centered Teaching* by Maryellen Weimer (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002)*

## **Opportunities for Discipline-Based Course Development**

Collegiate units and individual faculty members interested in designing new courses or redesigning existing courses through a collaborative effort can contact CETL to develop a customized, course development initiative.

For example, this fall the College of Engineering is partnering with CETL to offer four faculty from four different Schools a chance to meet throughout fall term to discuss teaching for learning, using interactive pedagogy to engage students, and addressing the challenges involved in effective course development. CETL will assist faculty as they use a course design model to develop their curricula, and faculty will draw ideas from the group and receive feedback as they proceed. In the spring, the faculty will teach their new courses and serve as peer consultants to one another. CETL will assist with carrying out informal and/or formal assessment plans during the implementation process as requested. The College of Engineering will provide each faculty member with \$1000 to support their efforts.

### **Plan for 2011-12 Engineering Cohort:**

- August 29:     Introductions and Overview  
                  Assignment: Situational Factors (Step 1 Worksheet in Fink – page 7)
- September 19: Share Situational Factors  
                  Discuss Bloom’s Taxonomy and Learning Goals  
                  Assignment: Learning Goals (Step 2 Worksheet in Fink – pages 11-12)
- October 3:     Share Learning Goals  
                  Discuss Assessment and Grading  
                  Assignment: Assessment (Step 3 Worksheet in Fink – page 15)
- October 31:    Share Assessment  
                  Discuss Instructional Strategies, Engaged Pedagogies  
                  Assignment: Instructional Strategies
- November 21: Share Instructional Strategies  
                  Discuss Integration  
                  Assignment: Worksheets 1, 2 in Fink – pages 23, 30
- December 5:   Share Integration  
                  Discuss what’s next  
                  Assignment: Pages 31-33 in Fink



# HIGHER EDUCATION CERTIFICATES

## ADVANCED CERTIFICATE

### 1. Course Design for Higher Education (CETL 8803 CD, 3 credits)

Learn how to apply research-based teaching principles to create a learner-centered college course with the support of a CETL-lead peer learning community.

### 2. Teaching Immersion (CETL 8801 IMM, 1 credit)

Teach an entire college course as Instructor of Record with the support of a faculty mentor and a CETL-lead peer learning community. Design and implement a small Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL) project.  
*Practicum locations: Georgia Tech, Georgia Perimeter College, Agnes Scott, or Spelman College.*

## INTERMEDIATE CERTIFICATE

### 1. Fundamentals of Teaching & Learning in Higher Education (CETL 8803 TL, 3 credits)

Learn how to apply research-based teaching principles to create a learner-centered college classroom.

### 2. Mentored Practicum (CETL 8802/3, PR, 2 to 3 credits)

Teach 15% of a college course with the support of a faculty mentor and a CETL-lead peer learning community. Learn about faculty careers in academia and preparing for the academic job search.  
*Practicum locations: Georgia Tech, Georgia Perimeter College, Agnes Scott, or Spelman College.*

## FOUNDATION LEVEL - PREREQUISITE

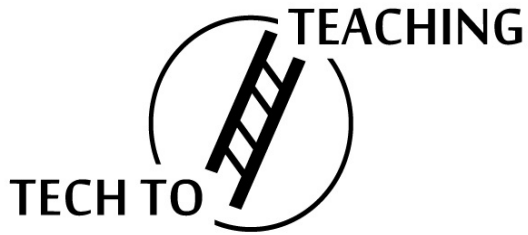
One term as a college-level TA with instructional responsibilities like leading recitation or lab.

For more information, please visit our website: <http://www.techto teach.gatech.edu>



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# Higher Education Pathway

## ACADEMIC JOB RESOURCES

### ♦ Workshops and Graduate Career Symposium (every March)

Topics:

- Career Options in Academia (Panels)
- Academic Job Search Overview
- Writing a CV and Cover Letter
- Creating a Teaching Philosophy and Portfolio
- Preparing for the Teaching Demo
- Giving a Job Talk
- Academic Interviewing and Negotiating

### ♦ Individual Consultations

Topics:

- Academic career options and planning
- Options for gaining teaching experience during graduate school
- Differences between faculty career options
- Academic job search process and strategies
- Curriculum Vita, Cover Letter, Teaching Philosophy or Portfolio, or Research Statement
- Phone or Campus Interview, Job, Research, or Chalk Talk, or Teaching Demo

For more information, please visit our website: <http://www.techtoteach.gatech.edu>



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# **A Self-Directed Guide to Designing Courses for Significant Learning**

**Source:**

<http://www.deefinkandassociates.com/GuidetoCourseDesignAug05.pdf>

**L. Dee Fink, PhD**

Director, Instructional Development Program  
University of Oklahoma

Author of:

*Creating Significant Learning Experiences:  
An Integrated Approach to Designing College Courses*

(San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003)

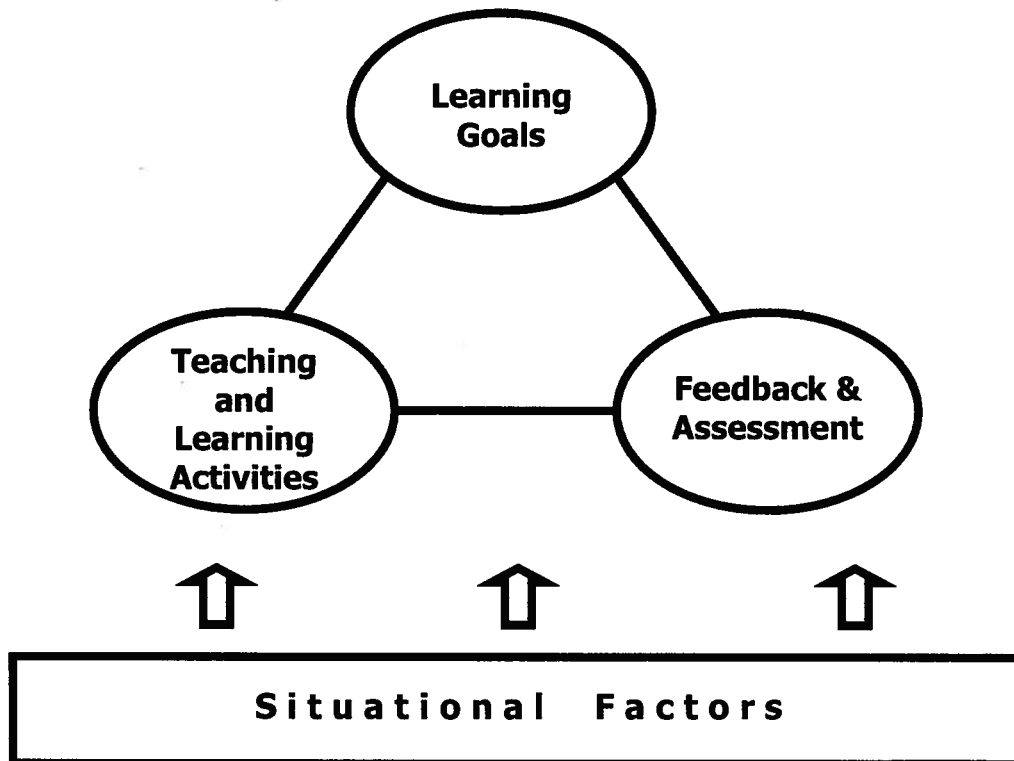
## An Overview of Integrated Course Design

The basic components in this model of Integrated Course Design are the same as those found in other models of instructional design: analyze the **situational factors**, formulate the **learning goals**, design the **feedback and assessment** procedures, and select the **teaching/learning activities**. What is distinctive about this model is that these components have been put together in a way that reveals and emphasizes their inter-relatedness. (See Model 1 below)

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Model 1

### The Key Components Of INTEGRATED COURSE DESIGN



#### **INITIAL DESIGN PHASE: Build Strong Primary Components**

- Step 1. Identify important **situational factors**
- Step 2. Identify important **learning goals**
- Step 3. Formulate appropriate **feedback and assessment procedures**
- Step 4. Select effective **teaching/learning activities**
- Step 5. Make sure the primary components are **integrated**

#### **INTERMEDIATE DESIGN PHASE: Assemble the Components into a Coherent Whole**

- Step 6. Create a thematic **structure for the course**
- Step 7. Select or create an **instructional strategy**
- Step 8. Integrate the course structure and the instructional strategy to create an **overall scheme of learning activities**

#### **FINAL DESIGN PHASE: Finish Important Remaining Tasks**

- Step 9. Develop the **grading system**
- Step 10. De-Bug **possible problems**
- Step 11. Write the course **syllabus**
- Step 12. Plan an **evaluation** of the course and of your teaching