

Summary of Research

Effective teaching may impact students far beyond their college experience. There is a considerable amount of research about effective teaching. One of the most recognized studies suggests that clarity, task orientated, enthusiasm, opportunity for students to learn and variability are characteristics of effective instructors. Many researchers have suggested that creativity is also an important component of effective teaching. As consumers of effective teaching, students may be able to offer unique perspectives about effective teaching behaviors, particularly the characteristic of creativity.

The purpose of this study was to explain and predict creative and effective teaching of university instructors. Student evaluations, self-reported teaching evaluations, and standardized creativity instruments were used to assess instructor creativity. In addition, students' perceptions of their instructor's creativity in teaching were compared with instructor's self-reported creativity in teaching. Finally, the creativity of instructors, as assessed by a standardized creativity instrument, was also compared to the perceptions of effective teaching held by their students and self reported instructor evaluations.

All CAFNR faculty teaching undergraduate courses, excluding special problems and introduction courses, were invited to participate in the study. In addition, all undergraduate students enrolled in a class with the selected instructors were invited to participate in this study (N = 1674). Instructors and students representing 40 classes chose to participate in the study.

An online instrument was distributed via email to students enrolled in CAFNR courses. Additional measures were taken to ensure respondents represented each cluster. A

minimum of 30 respondents or 50% of students enrolled in each course was required before the cluster was included in the analysis. A total of 921 students completed the instrument for a 55% response rate.

Key Findings

- Instructors and students agreed that creative teaching behaviors occur in CAFNR courses.
- Little relationship was found between instructors' perceived creativity, norm referenced creativity, and students' perceived creativity.
- CAFNR instructors believe they exhibit creative teaching behaviors. Of the four creativity constructs, instructors use elaboration most frequently in their teaching and are least likely to use originality. Considering the presence of creative teaching behaviors, it can be concluded that instructors value creativity as a component of teaching (see Table 1).

Table 1
Summated Scores for Instructors' Self-Perceived Level of Creative Teaching Behaviors (n = 40)

Construct	M	SD
Summated Self -Perceived Creative Teaching Behavior	5.73	.72
Elaboration	6.18	.61
Frequency	5.81	.87
Flexibility	5.58	.93
Originality	5.35	1.15

Note. Scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = undecided, 5 = slightly agree, 6 = agree, 7 = strongly agree.

- CAFNR instructors have a high level of creativity, as measured by the Abbreviated Torrance Test for Adults (ATTA).
- CAFNR instructors did not follow the standardized curve typically associated with

the ATTA. The majority of instructors scored above average, high or substantial on the ATTA (see Figure 3).

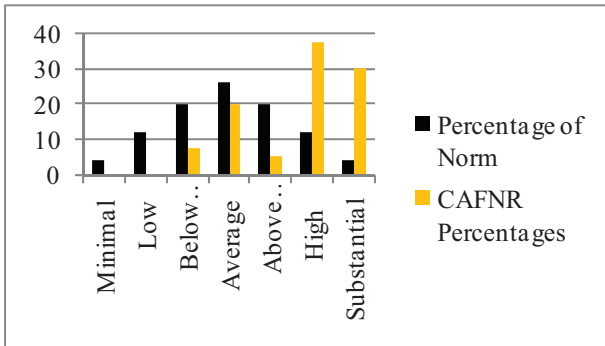


Figure 1. Comparison of standardized, norm-referenced scores of the ATTA to CAFNR instructors' ATTA scores.

- Students believe CAFNR instructors are effective teachers. Students agreed that instructors displayed clarity, variability, opportunity to learn, task oriented, and enthusiasm in their teaching. Enthusiasm was the most frequently reported effective teaching construct demonstrated by CAFNR faculty while variability was least observed by students (see Table 2).

Table 2
Summated Scores for Students' Perceived Effective Teaching (n = 40)

Construct	M	SD
Self- Perceived Effective Teaching	5.64	.69
Enthusiasm	5.87	.71
Task Oriented	5.83	.53
Opportunity to Learn	5.64	.70
Clarity	5.58	.85
Variability	5.23	.90

Note. Scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = undecided, 5 = slightly agree, 6 = agree, 7 = strongly agree.

- Students believe creative instructors are effective teachers. A significant and very high correlation ($r = .91$) was found between students' perceptions of creative teaching behaviors of instructors and students' perceptions of effective teaching.
- Teaching experience does not impact the self-perceived or norm-referenced creativity of CAFNR instructors. However, a

significant difference existed between students' perceived creative teaching behaviors of their instructors and the experience of these instructors. Students indicated that instructors with more than five years of teaching experience exhibit more creative teaching behaviors

- Demographic characteristics of gender, academic level, and degree program did not influence students' academic advising needs or students' evaluation of faculty performance.

Recommendations and Implications

- If students perceive that creative teaching is effective teaching, then identifying creativity of instructor becomes paramount. Increasing the creative teaching behaviors of instructors could lead to more effective teaching.
- Because CAFNR instructors demonstrate creativity levels above the norm referenced population, additional research should focus on instructor creativity. Does the research environment contribute to instructor creativity? Would alternative methods to assess instructor's creativity yield different findings?
- Further research should include qualitative methods to observe and record behaviors instructors use related to creativity. In addition, training to help instructors learn to promote and embrace creative teaching practices may be implemented to increase the occurrence of these creative teaching behaviors.
- Teaching methods that improve clarity and variability should be the focus of future research. Faculty development programs should be designed to address increasing variability and clarity in the learning environment.
- Effective and creative teaching behaviors of CAFNR faculty should continue to be the focus of faculty development programs.