



INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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YOU'RE IN CHARGE: TEACHING FOR THE REAL WORLD

As a criminal justice instructor always looking for new and creative methods to motivate and challenge my students, I have found a teaching mechanism that motivates students, stimulates their creativity, and affords them the satisfaction of a finished product.

I teach two courses—Introduction to Security and Police Administration, and I begin day one telling the students they are in charge. They will be viewed as police chiefs or CEO's, depending on the course. This approach challenges students to make decisions, write policy, lead, and accept responsibility.

In the security course, students are required to create a full-service security company, with a chain of command, job duties for each position, and a hiring protocol. From this foundation, they must develop individual performance evaluations and disciplinary and promotion policies for their departments. The Scalar principle of organization, subsequent job duties, and evaluations allow the student CEO's to draw the whole picture, including delegation of duties, accountability, employment laws, profit and loss statements, and budgets.

This first project leads into the principles of risk management. My class takes site tours and performs analyses of various businesses and industries in western New York. These sites have become valuable teaching tools, supporting classroom study and allowing students to:

- observe companies' standard operating procedures via tours with security heads
- conduct individual risk analysis of each company
- present this finished analysis to the company, and
- engage in follow-up to the company.

This approach to security instruction has received widespread support from all parties. The businesses present their companies and receive an educated outside review of their policies and procedures in a professional format. The students are put into responsible positions to put their knowledge to work, and

public relations for the college are excellent. Finally, the students are developing an eye for safety, environmental, and security concerns in a wide array of scenarios.

The last security module deals with alarm systems, not the most dynamic subject on which to lecture. To maintain the challenging atmosphere and strong motivation from the prior modules and to support the lecture, the students receive blueprints of local companies and residential buildings, and then design totally integrated security systems for each. The criteria for the designs are based upon cost effectiveness, need, and risk management. The best designs are presented to representatives from local industries, and the students are expected to defend their work and "sell" the design to the company representatives. The benefits of this approach include all aspects of college studies from communication to research to math.

Again, I use the "you're in charge" approach in police administration. Students build their own police departments based upon demographics I have provided, including population, total number of sworn officers, economic and business environments, schools, and parks. From these demographics, students design their own department organizational charts and follow them throughout the course, acting as chiefs of police.

As a New York State Police Accreditation Assessor, with access to documents describing the standards, I can provide my students with critical information that, in concert with weekly lectures, helps them develop standards for their individual departments. My goals include:

- challenging students to think like executives
- developing their technical writing skills
- helping them develop a working knowledge of all facets of police work, and
- making them cognizant of existing laws.

It is easy for teachers to fall back on the safe approaches of lectures, traditional tests, and projects where students' minds are on the final grade—not the trip taken to get there! Students are shocked at first when I tell them that they are in charge, but they soon find out that being in charge is answering the question, "What



would you do?" and making decisions based upon goals and objectives. "What would you do?" becomes my mantra, offering students important challenges as they develop skills and create organizations of which they can be proud.

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RESPONDING TO TRAGEDY

After the September 11 terrorist attack, the college where I teach did not close down or cancel any classes. That decision was left to the discretion of each instructor, most likely because we are 90 miles north of Manhattan and there appeared to be no imminent danger to anyone in our vicinity. As did many others where I live, I went in to teach my classes that day.

When I arrived, the mood in my department was tense. Everyone's focus was on the news of the catastrophe and its effect upon us all. Word went around that students could not focus on academics and that teaching classes was difficult. Many instructors reported that about one-third of the registered students were absent. I teach psychology, and I was aware of the tremendously deep psychological effects this event would have on people, especially young people, and decided to meet with my students so we could deal with their feelings. Most of them were 19 to 20 and vulnerable to the events taking place.

I ignored my preplanned curriculum, went to my office, and prepared a handout containing a brief paragraph about the disaster for all my classes. I requested my students to comment in writing about their feelings/impressions/reactions to this tragic event.

When I arrived at my first class early afternoon, the students were tense. Most knew what had happened, but a few did not. There was a disturbing level of anxiety. I immediately told them what I knew, adding that we would put aside the day's planned academic schedule and deal with the immediate situation.

They read the handout and within minutes began writing their thoughts; they wrote for about 20 minutes. When they finished, I asked them to form small groups and discuss their comments with each other. There was

a high, intense level of verbal interaction. They shared feelings, attitudes, and thoughts.

After the group exchanges, I asked them to note, on the bottom of their handouts, some of the themes that emerged. This took five minutes. Then, as students volunteered their comments, I wrote them on transparencies and projected them onto a large screen.

Responses varied. Their primary feelings were sympathy, anger, disbelief, revenge, patriotism, insecurity, fear, rage, grief, anxiety, confusion, surrealism, helplessness, disconnectedness, and deep vulnerability. We discussed each of these responses together, attempted to explore methods for dealing with these feelings, and learned from each other.

We also discussed the psychological effects upon people when their nation's symbols are attacked and destroyed (The World Trade Center, the Pentagon, American Airlines, United Airlines), and what those symbols represent. We discussed America's role globally—how our actions affect other people and how theirs affect us. We discussed what it meant to be an American in a college classroom filled with so many Americans, representing so many ethnic groups and nationalities.

One of our main conclusions was that the generation who had grown up during the last two decades felt invulnerable, secure, and relatively happy in the most booming economy the U.S. has ever had. They were a generation raised in comfort, protected from the ills of the world. They had never known war. The violence they knew came, for the most part, from the make-believe world of films and television.

When we finished, I tried to focus on the preplanned academics with the time we had left. My students seemed ready to move on, so we did. At the end of class, there was some nervousness, but a more relaxed feeling pervaded the classroom. Many students expressed their gratitude for the discussion.

Although this younger generation I was teaching would now be forever emotionally scarred with the terrorist attacks on our homeland, I hope that they were feeling more connected with themselves, their peers, and others in the national and global community.

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