

Why will we teach what we teach?

California State University, Fullerton (CSUF) offers a collaborative comprehensive curriculum that is grounded in the liberal arts, but is responsive to professional and workforce based needs. CSUF builds programs that seek to challenge, prepare, and engage students and faculty in the classroom, in the community, and across the world.

What will we teach? And Why will we teach it?

It is important to bear in mind the goal of higher learning: an intellectual community that aspires to encompass, enrich and expand the richness and breath of human knowledge. CSUF is a comprehensive public university, which means that we must also strike a balance between our commitment to a liberal arts education and to a professional education. With that in mind, the learning experience at CSUF must encompass the following:

- Teach critical thinking
- Provide tools/methods for problem solving
- Encourage independent thought, nurture creative ideas and innovative student research
- Enhance our commitment to freedom of thought, speech, and inquiry
- Prepare students for the workforce needs of the 21st century to address the changing needs of a diverse, technologically-driven, global society.

A few ideas/plans to consider:

- ***Strengthen existing undergraduate and graduate programs.***
Let's enhance and place more resources on the things we do well. We have a great Nursing program, a very prestigious Accounting program and countless other programs that are well regarded nationally and regionally.
- ***Offer new courses and programs***
Budget issues may have limited the ability of our campus in offering new courses and programs. Nonetheless, this should not hold back our commitment to improve and innovate. For example, in the strategic planning for the MCBE, an area where most courses/programs underperformed were in the global component. This is concerning particularly as we strive to have a "global outlook". New programs must: 1) address regional workforce needs, 2) be self-supporting, 3) align with the core mission of the University.
- ***Provide a rich academic and intellectual climate that challenges students***
Ensure that all courses have challenging learning outcomes. It is important to assist faculty in developing and creating new courses. This also mean that we might have to align enrollment and resources with best teaching practices (i.e., revisit the role of smaller classes, program enrollment caps, promote and support faculty/student interactions outside classroom, promote learning communities).

- ***Promote a culture that honors and respects free thought, free speech and freedom of expression***

Freedom of thought and expression should be the foundation upon which a learning environment should be built. It should permeate everything we do. It should be the core mission of our university, where discovery and inquiry are pursued free from coercion and censorship. If we want to set ourselves up as a model public comprehensive university, we should reaffirm loud and clear our commitment to freedom of expression so that students and faculty know that speaking your mind at CSUF does not put your education or your career at risk. This should set us apart from recent disheartening trends at other institutions of higher learning.

- ***Make learning a transformational experience through experimental teaching, innovative pedagogical techniques, and technological advances.***

Support experiential learning, including undergraduate and graduate research, field studies, internships, service learning, etc. Increase the number of programs, courses and students with a multi-disciplinary component. Enhance the number of programs, courses and students with a study abroad component. We should also expand efforts to attract more international students, enhance partnerships with foreign universities, and provide opportunities for faculty and students to interact with counterparts abroad. Use cutting edge technologies to expand students' abilities to engage in critical thinking and problem solving. These are all important objectives if we want to position ourselves as an university with global outlook that is also on the cutting-edge of technology and innovation.

- ***Ensure excellence in teaching by supporting all faculty***

More support should be provided not only to TT faculty but also to lecturers. A large number of our courses are taught by contingent faculty, who are generally less supported in their activities and less rewarded for their efforts. A Northwestern University study found that students learn more from contingent faculty than TT in their first term courses. We need to think of ways to make contingent faculty less temporary and more permanent, perhaps by thinking of ways to get them more engaged. An idea worth exploring is offering clinical positions or a tenure-track "light" position which is more geared towards teaching.

Why will we teach what we teach?

Ideologically, students require a broad engagement with a range of disciplines to develop into well-educated human beings. This breadth-based foundation will provide students with the freedom to choose their appropriate calling at which point they can delve into specific disciplines to gain experience necessary for their future careers. This breadth of engagement is especially important in a global economy that requires cultural sensitivity and innovation as much if not more than disciplinary specific knowledge. Given the rapid changes in economies, students will likely change careers multiple times. If they have an educational foundation in critical and creative thinking, effective communication, cultural awareness, information literacy, and quantitative reasoning, they can work through a range of career options and apply their skills to a broad swath of career options. If students learn from a number of disciplines, they will become

adaptable thinkers and creative responders to the increasingly complex challenges they will face in the future.

Why will we teach what we teach?

- Civic engagement – better citizens and voters
- Make better choices for life – home ownership, family relations, how to deal with adversity, how to deal with finances, how to prepare for future, globalization.
- Betterment of one's life – jobs, professions, career options.
- Build stronger local and regional community.
- Preparation for graduate and professional schools

Why will we teach what we teach? – While a main goal is to establish strong pillars of functional knowledge, habits, and self-esteem for all students regardless of degree, CSUF aims for students to be able to utilize their specific knowledgebase towards a professional career, understanding our world, and propelling our culture to new heights. However, CSUF can raise the bar by specifically teaching students *how and where* they can use their skills in a more direct fashion. For many college campuses, their jobs end when the student acquires their degree. Students come to college with the expectation of personal development, but they also have the expectation that this improvement will push them ahead in the job market, which to some extent is true. The downside to this is that more and more students are going to college with the same expectations, lessening the demand for degrees in a proliferated market, and not enough of them are being instructed or guided towards an actual career in the field there are pursuing. Soon after receiving their degree, many find that they have no practical experience or expertise in how to market *themselves* within that field. Teaching or mentoring, students to do some sort of work within their field so they can improve their chances on entering or staying within the middle class themselves in our economy may be something we want to consider including in what we teach within each major discipline at CSUF. Masters degrees that we offer here on campus do this, but I have to admit, not always to a long term goal (sometimes it is just a “nuisance” requirement). It should also be noted that while I do understand that we have a career center here on campus, most of our students are commuter students who live off campus and will not utilize all voluntary materials, or are even aware of their existence.

- Why will we teach what we teach?
 - To inform and empower students
 - To educate future leaders/professionals/creators/citizens of the state and the country
 - To make our students competitive their professions (ones they anticipate and ones they don't) and/or for graduate education
 - To educate students to become critical thinkers and effective communicators
 - To teach students to relate to others
 - To reach and represent a broad cross section of race, class, gender, and

ethnicity

- To provide our students a basis from which to become informed, ethical, engaged citizens
 - To provide students with direct access to faculty/scholars/current research
 - To prepare students for the long life after college (personally, professionally, educationally)
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- Why will we teach what we teach?

This question might actually come first. If our mission and goals are not to prepare the workforce of the future, then what we teach will need to follow the goal of why we teach. There was discussion of whether we are focused on under-represented and underserved populations and would serve these populations with less emphasis on graduation rates (they may be successful at a different time interval than our well represented students). Would we sacrifice these students to have a great retention and graduation number? Or are we committed to serving under-represented students, providing the support that they need, and being OK with lower retention and graduation rates if that best serves the population, while continuing to refine the support needed to ensure their success?

2. Why will we teach what we teach?

Education has a dual purpose: to enrich both the individual and society. An overarching goal of higher education is to improve society by promoting students' creativity, critical thinking, communication skills, analytical skills, and specialized knowledge and capabilities. On the one hand, we teach what we teach to prepare students for successful professional careers and fulfilling adult lives. On the other hand, we teach what we teach to prepare students to participate in a complex globalized society, and to address the social and environmental challenges of 21st century civilization.

Why will we teach what we teach?

We will teach what we teach because students must be able to function in an ever changing society.

We as teachers are responsible for our students to:

- 1- Be employable. (Must every degree lead to a job?)
- 2- To relish in learning. (How do we in this?)
- 3- To have a deep and compassionate understanding of the world they live in. (I guess this an "affective state".)

Why will we teach what we teach?5