Our Vision and Focus for the Course

On Aug. 21, 2001, then-President David A. Bednar outlined part of his vision for the faculty of the newly established BYU-Idaho. He described faculty members who became practitioners of the scholarship of learning and teaching—inspired innovators and collaborators who collectively would become leaders in the field of learning and teaching. “In my mind, the overarching theme for all of our scholarly work at Brigham Young University-Idaho should be inspired inquiry and innovation. Let me repeat that: inspired inquiry and innovation.” Such innovations would be shaped by faculty members’ “access to gifts of the Spirit,” ultimately leading the faculty of BYU-Idaho to “excel in and play a pioneering role in understanding learning and teaching processes.”

A key component of this pioneering role would be collaboration, explained President Bednar. Note the oft-overlooked italicized phrase preceding one of President Bednar’s most famous statements in this address: “We ought to have, we will have, ways to more effectively share and distribute and disseminate our own inspired innovation on this campus. And as we do so, the world will come here. We will be a light on a hill in the scholarship of learning and teaching” (emphasis added).

Less than a month later, Henry B. Eyring, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve and the Commissioner of Church Education at the time, succinctly charged those who teach and lead at BYU-Idaho, “The phrase ‘rethinking education’ is not to be only a slogan for the transformation from a two- to four-year status, the school is to be a place of educational innovation—permanently.” Speaking to a group of religious educators in another setting, Elder Eyring suggested a focus for the perpetual innovation we were to be seeking: “Most of us have had some experience with self-improvement efforts. My experience has taught me this about how people and organizations improve: the best place to look is for small changes we could make in things we do often. There is power in steadiness and repetition. And if we can be led by inspiration to choose the right small things to change, consistent obedience will bring great improvement.”

We those quotes in mind, we invite you to focus on these two questions as you engage in this course:

1. What are one or two small changes I can make this semester that will lead to the greatest improvement in learning for my students?
2. What can I do to become a more innovative, collaborative practitioner of the scholarship of learning and teaching—a teacher who progresses each semester?

(For what it’s worth, the statement version of those questions are our outcomes for this course. Course participants will make one or two small changes that lead to the greatest improvement in learning for their students. And they will become more innovative, collaborative practitioners of the scholarship of learning and teaching—teachers who progress each semester.)
We promise to expose you to far more good ideas in this course than you'll be able to use next semester—or perhaps in the rest of your career. Frankly, the sheer scope and number of possible innovations can be overwhelming, even paralyzing. But if you focus your efforts on these two questions, your experience will be less overwhelming and more fruitful.

Assume that somewhere over the course of the semester, ideas are tucked away for one or two possible changes in your teaching that could really have a fairly significant impact on how much your students learn. They might even lead to life-changing improvements in the way some of your students learn, not only in your class but all their classes. The ideas could be in the assigned reading, an article you find on your own, the book you read, a comment a colleague makes in class, or something you observe another teacher do. Make finding and implement those one or two ideas that will most improve your teaching your quest for this course.

In your hunt for the best changes you can make, you will likely gather more ideas than you can act on any time soon. But keep the list, and you may have enough ideas to implement one at a time to help you progress for many semesters to come. Indeed, such a list could be a catalyst in helping you do more to move along this spectrum.

At the left extreme are teachers who are content with their current level of proficiency. They might just be too busy to invest much time in pedagogical innovation, or they might feel so competent that they see no pressing need to improve. Worse yet, they might feel that they aren't capable of improving. At the other extreme are teachers who regularly engage in inspired inquiry, investigating colleagues’ best practices as well as ideas from the scholarship of learning and teaching. With the help of gifts of the Spirit, these teachers consistently innovate and collaborate, sharing what they learn with colleagues, even as they continue to learn from their peers. In between are teachers who tinker in the scholarship of learning and teaching, occasionally reading something and periodically trying out a new idea in class.

Our hope during this semester is to introduce you to resources and experiences that will inspire you, wherever you currently find yourself on this spectrum, to move further toward the perpetually progressing end of the spectrum. Our aim is to help you develop even more of the desire, discipline, and capacity to become a progressing practitioner in the scholarship of learning and teaching—a teacher who is better not just next semester, but throughout your teaching career.
Truly a Group Effort

We need your help. Sure, three of us will formally play the role of teachers in this course, but we will be tackling the experience with the same questions in mind. But we fully expect to glean ideas from you and from what others have written that will fundamentally improve the way we teach. And our hope is that the majority of good ideas that emerge this semester will come from the “students” rather than the teachers.

What’s more, this course is a work in progress. You are only the second group to take it, and you are by far the most seasoned. We invite you to help us make this a great experience, not only for those taking it this semester, but for those who participate in future semesters. Kindly share any suggestions you have for improving the course. And help us find and include even better resources from the scholarship of learning and teaching for each module.

Investing Time

We hope that you’ll take this opportunity seriously but won’t feel overwhelmed by it. We want it to be a joyful investment that lifts you up instead of an onerous burden that weighs you down.

If you were to do all the assignments, this course should take you about six or seven hours each week. We designed the course so that those completing all the assignments would spend 120 minutes each week attending class, about 200 minutes completing assignments that are part of the weekly routine, and another 90 minutes each week working on some kind of ad hoc assignment. For the ad hoc assignments, something different is usually due each week, although you get a couple of weeks to work on some of the bigger ones.

If you are receiving three hours of PDL or load relief this semester, you could well complete all the reading and assignments. More importantly, your investment in reading from the scholarship of learning and teaching will benefit everyone in the course, and your investment in completing other assignments will help you better internalize what you learn.

But we understand that each of you has different circumstances that will affect your ability to invest time outside of class. So don’t worry: even though we have assignments, there’s no grade for this course or consequence for withdrawing or simply auditing. Our hope is that what will drive the time you invest more than anything else will be a genuine interest in learning how to become even more effective in helping students learn.
Assignments & Projects

You’ll find more detailed instructions about each of the assignments in I-Learn. But here’s the basic overview of the assignments due each week and how long they should take:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Per Week</th>
<th>Type of Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90 Minutes</td>
<td>Preparatory reading and watching (60 minutes assigned, 30 minutes choosing from Digging Deeper options)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 minutes</td>
<td>Preparation assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 minutes</td>
<td>Teach one another assignment (discussion board, lunch with a colleague, or book club)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 minutes</td>
<td>Read a book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 minutes</td>
<td>Ponder and prove (teaching journal or blog)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90 Minutes</td>
<td>Ad hoc assignments (different assignment due each week or two)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120 minutes</td>
<td>Attend class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 hrs. and 50 mins.</td>
<td>Total investment each week</td>
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**Preparatory reading assignment** (90 minutes per week). This includes 30 minutes or so for each class of required reading, plus spending 15 minutes watching or reading from among your choice of additional readings and videos. Please complete these before each class.

**A short assignment assessing or facilitating your preparation** for each class to help you be accountable for reading before class (20 minutes per week). These assignments might range from taking a short quiz to completing a brief worksheet to sharing some comments about a document using a tool like Perusall. Please complete these before each class.

**A teach one another assignment** (30 minutes per week). You’ll have a choice between participating in a discussion board or going to lunch with a colleague. You’re free to hop back and forth between the discussion board or collaborative lunch with a colleague. These assignments will be due by 10:30 p.m. each Saturday night.

**Reading a book** (30 minutes per week). Choose one book from among the list of books we’ve suggested. You’re welcome to read it all in the beginning or to cram it in at the end, unless you’re participating in a book club, in which case you can’t put it off to the end of the semester. The time is just an estimate, based on the page numbers and average reading speed of college-estimated adults. But our hope is that most of you will be able to finish the book you choose by
investing about 30 minutes a week throughout the semester. There is no weekly due date for this assignment.

★ Ponder and prove (30 minutes per week). Here you’ll get to choose between a teaching journal and a blog. And you’re free to alternate between the two options as much as you like. Whichever medium you choose—the more private, introspective mode of a teaching journal or the more public, collaborative mode of a blog of some kind—the idea is for you to articulate some of what you’ve learned during the week, what you hope to apply, things you’ve learned from talking with or observing colleagues, or lessons you’ve learned from trying to implement insights from past lessons. This assignment is also due by 10:30 p.m. each Saturday night.

In addition to these weekly assignments, we have created a series of additional projects, each of which you will complete only once in the semester. You will find detailed instructions about each of these projects in I-Learn, but here is a quick overview:

Weeks 2 – 7 and 8 – 12: Arrange to be observed by SCOTs (~ 60 mins.)

You will arrange to be observed by students from SCOT (Student Consults on Teaching) two times during the semester during weeks 2 - 7 and weeks 8 – 12. All you’ll need to do is add any questions you like to the instrument the students use, contact them, and then read any feedback they provide.

Week 3: Observe colleagues teach (~ 60 mins.)

We’ll give you a list of outstanding teachers from across campus who have consented to be observed, complete with some areas of emphasis in which each excels.

Week 4: Have a classmate observe you (~ 30 mins.)

All you need to do is invite a classmate to observe you, give them any direction about the kind of feedback you’d like, and then take the time to read or listen to that feedback.

Week 5: Interview colleagues and learn from them (~ 60 mins.)

You get to choose the colleagues, the topic, and whether to interview one for an hour or 12 for five minutes each or any other combination that takes you 60 minutes.

Week 6: Create a mid-term survey (~ 60 mins.)

You’ll create a Qualtrics survey asking questions about how to improve one of your own courses.

Sometime during Weeks 7 – 13: Design and teach one class period (~ 5 hrs.)

Your assigned team of four will choose one of the available topics and dates and will be responsible for jointly teaching the class that day. This is a major assignment that will require your team to meet together outside of class as you prepare your lesson plan. You will do this only once in the semester; the particular date it is due hinges on which topic your team chooses to teach.
**Week 8: Create a fairly raw, three-minute video-cast (~ 2 hrs.)**

This will be explaining something you learned from a Digging Deeper resource (or multiple resources) that especially interests you. This will give you experience creating a podcast and use a resource we can share with colleagues across campus in our new Creative Course Collaboration (C3) Community.

**Week 9: Provide us with some formative feedback (~ 30 mins.)**

This one will be easy, but invaluable to us, as you complete a survey on how the course is going and what we could change to make it better.

**Week 10: Create a “cook book” of in-class activities (~ 2 hrs.)**

We hope you’ll see, read, and hear about many different kinds of activities you might do in class. This assignment will give you a chance to catalogue some of your favorites so that you can come back to this list whenever you need some ideas for variety.

**Week 12: Create a short book report (~ 2 hrs.)**

You can either write a book report or substantially participate in a book club. The book report could be written or audio-visual. Either way, creating something that encapsulates what you learn will help you cement those insights in your own mind while providing some more valuable resources for the C3 Community. If you chose the book club, you will need to meet with your book club at least three equally spaced times throughout the semester to discuss what you are learning.

**Week 13: Final reflecting project (~ 2 hrs.)**

In whatever medium you like, you’ll create a short summary of the most important lessons you learn during the semester, and you’ll post it on Portfolium.

**Choose Your Own Adventure**

What if you don’t particularly care for some of these assignments, or something else comes to mind that gets you even more excited? Simply make a counterproposal to us about any or all of these assignments (except for the teaching a class with your team). Once we approve it, you can do that instead. With that option in place, you share the burden for making sure the assignments in this course are meaningful learning experiences instead of busy work.

**Talk with Us, Please!**

Rob, Sid, and Brian would love to help you individually or your team in any way we can. Just grab us before or after class, send us an e-mail, or come by to see us in our offices. Like you, we have other meetings and obligations, so check our office hours for the best times to see us. But if those don't work, send us an e-mail and we'll arrange to meet with you at another time.
• Rob’s e-mail is eatonr@byui.edu. His office phone is 496-1135. And his office hours are Mondays and Wednesdays from 4:15 – 5:15, Thursdays from 1:00 – 2:00, and Fridays from 9:00 – 10:00 in Kimball 210D.

• Sid’s e-mail is palmers@byui.edu. His office phone is 496-4622. And his office hours are 12:45 – 1:45 daily in McKay 172.

• Brian’s e-mail is schmidts@byui.edu. His office phone is 496-1154. And his office hours are Mondays and Wednesdays from 2:15 – 3:15 and 4:15 – 5:15 p.m. in McKay 350B.