

### *Ali Kara--Teaching Philosophy*

I have been teaching at the Pennsylvania State University York Campus for 25 years. I mostly teach marketing and international business courses for the associate and baccalaureate business degrees we offer. I believe that undergraduate coursework should provide usable knowledge and critical thinking skills that students could use in other courses and in their careers. Keeping in mind the conceptual foundations and practical applications of the courses I teach, effective teaching in my discipline strongly depends on the interactions among instructor, students, practitioners, and the subject matter in-and-outside the classroom. Mentoring students in multiple and variegated ways is my underlying motivation, as described here as well as in my accompanying biographical statement.

Effective teaching requires a passionate instructor who cares about his/her students. I continuously try to connect with my students and make them feel that they are valued as a student and as an individual. When they recognize that I am sincerely interested in their success both in and outside the classroom, they become more comfortable in participating in the learning process by asking questions, applying what is learned, and exploring additional topics that interests them. Students frequently visit me at my office to get involved with other scholarly opportunities or discuss various marketing related business ideas. I see my students as co-producers of the knowledge generated in the classroom and I encourage them to bring in their own experiences, ideas, innovations and interpretations of various marketing situations into the classroom. I try to help students to realize their own talents and capabilities by creating an inspiring classroom environment that helps students to expand their knowledge and strengthen their critical thinking. I encourage their involvement by providing various opportunities (such as marketing plan development for the small businesses in the community) and prompt and detailed feedback on their written assignments. Also, I schedule frequent face-to-face meetings with my students outside class to get a better sense about their learning and to check that they are not falling behind in learning course materials and topics covered.

Marketing is an applied discipline and students should be able to apply the knowledge they learned in the classroom to the real-life situations. Hence, in addition to the formal presentation and open-ended but guided discussion questions, I use a variety of traditional and student-centered teaching methods to prepare my students to face the challenges of the real-world business environment. Using case analyses, my students work in small groups inside and outside the classroom similar in structure to corporate teams to achieve organizational goals. I also try to create a classroom atmosphere that encourages students to participate in the discussions and using role-playing exercises, try to demonstrate the intricacies of their business decisions. For instance, to demonstrate the importance of seeing the “big picture” with respect to the complexities of marketing decision making, I use business simulation games in which students make simulated marketing decisions in groups to achieve their defined marketing objectives in a competitive environment. In addition, my students participate in the FOREX game to learn the challenges associated with international business transactions involving foreign currencies. These exercises make them to realize the value of planning and group decision making but also understand the success in group decision making depends on their ability to lead, cooperate, motivate, and learn to compromise to achieve the desired organizational goals.

I love teaching and I always try to conduct my teaching passionately and professionally. Throughout my career, students have always commented about the level of passion and energy they have observed in my teaching and expressed their sincere appreciation for the classes I teach. Students are more likely to be motivated to learn if they see the benefits of what they are learning and if they are confident that they can apply what is learned. Therefore, I pay close attention to students' different backgrounds, experiences, and their different learning styles to create a comfortable learning environment for all students. To help them to see the potential benefits of the knowledge learned, I consciously relate the course materials to real world business problems and situations as often as possible. I bring practitioners (such as salespersons, entrepreneurs) as guest speakers into the classroom to strengthen the relationship between concepts learned and how they are applied in practice. Providing students hands-on opportunities to explore various career paths and applications of marketing outside of the classroom is another important goal I seek to achieve. I assign real life projects, such as developing marketing plans or strategies for local entrepreneurs who are seeking marketing help. For instance, working with a colleague of mine, I helped two students to complete an investment banking project during the spring semester. Meeting weekly throughout the spring semester into the summer, these students completed a project for an investment banking firm who were looking for a comprehensive industry and

demand analysis for potential acquisition targets of independently owned businesses. We visited trade shows to learn more about companies that could be potential acquisition targets. Using various criteria, each firm was analyzed and added to the suggested target list. The completed project was praised significantly by the Graham Partners Inc., and they commented that the report was better than the similar reports prepared by the graduate students.

Finally, undergraduate research is an excellent way to help students to achieve deeper understanding of the concepts learned, apply scientific methods to investigate business topics, and actively engages students with the learning process. Through mentoring, I welcome and encourage my students in every opportunity to get engaged in undergraduate research, scholarship and creative work which facilitates deep and lasting high impact learning. As a result, I worked with several students on various undergraduate research projects involving social media, healthcare provider perceptions, and feasibility studies and for conference presentations or academic publications. I continuously look for various on-the job training opportunities for my students by connecting them with companies who offer marketing internships and other volunteer work for marketing projects for the campus, community, and beyond.