



INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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Three “M” Philosophy: Meaningful, Measurable, and Manageable

Currently, four generations of educators are working side by side: baby-boomers, echo-boomers, Generation X'ers, and millennials. Professional roles are about to be passed on from the generation that elected President Kennedy to the generation that elected President Obama. Part of our legacy as soon-to-be retired faculty members should be growing and mentoring those individuals who will replace us. Therefore, I—a soon-to-be retired speech professor—created the Three “M” Philosophy to help newer faculty members stay focused on why they are teachers as they follow my colleagues and me into the classroom upon our retirements.

The Three M's

The Three “M” Philosophy is a process to be used by faculty members to identify and evaluate effective professional and classroom goals, including choosing professional and classroom goals that are *meaningful*, *measurable*, and *manageable*.

Meaningful

American educator, author, and businessman Steve Covey has been quoted as saying, “Begin with the end in mind.” That’s a simple outlook, but many times faculty members have no idea what the end looks like for their professional careers, or even the end of an academic semester. To add focus to your career and classroom, make sure you set *meaningful* goals. A goal is defined as being a desired result that a person or a group of people envisions, plans, and commits to achieve. Meaningful goals are those that are valuable to you.

When identifying meaningful, professional goals, ask yourself: “What is important to my career?” and “Where do I see myself at the end of my academic career?” It is important that faculty members set goals that are meaningful so they don’t lose their enthusiasm for teaching. While institutions have general goals for their faculty members to achieve, it is also critical that you have goals for yourself. Individuals who do not have goals that are important to themselves can lose sight of their purpose. Examples of professional goals might include receiving tenure, becoming an academic dean, being recognized for writing academic publications, or for integrating a student success initiative at an institution. Whatever your goal is, make sure it is important to you.

Educators should also have meaningful classroom goals. To establish classroom goals, consider what you want to achieve in your classroom and why that is important to you and your students. Classroom goals may vary from semester to semester, but they should help instructors guide their classroom activities. Examples of such goals might include successfully proving students have learned course content, incorporating three new teaching strategies into a course, having high retention rates, or having low failing rates.

Measurable

Once you have identified meaningful professional and classroom goals, you then need to figure out how you can *measure* your progress toward those goals. To determine how to measure your progress, consider these two questions: “What does achieving the goal or objective look like?” and “Which methods can be used to quantify those achievements?” If you can’t measure your progress toward a goal, how do you know the goal has been achieved? Quantifying goals with something that is objective and measurable contextualizes the goal and ratifies the idea.

To measure professional goals, educators can create checklists that include the steps necessary to reach their desired goals. An instructor who wants to become a tenured professor can create and assess a checklist of items that need to be completed in order to be considered for tenure.

Instructors can measure success toward classroom goals by administering learning assessments and by gauging student engagement. For example, if your classroom goal is to achieve a specific passing rate for your class, then you might measure your success toward that goal by how well your students perform on quizzes, tests, and other assessments.

Manageable

After you have set your sights on what you want to do and have measurable ways to determine whether you are successful, you then need to make sure you can *manage* your time and resources while achieving the goal. Ask yourself the following questions:

- How can I reach my goal?
- What factors are within and outside my control?
- Can I break down my goal into smaller steps, parts, or hours?
- Do I need more training to complete my goal and do I have time for additional training?
- What resources do I need to reach my goal?

If your goal is to successfully integrate three new

teaching strategies into your course, then you need a plan for how that will happen. As part of your plan you might need to research teaching strategies, attend professional development workshops focused on strategies, and spend time carefully selecting strategies that work best for a variety of course content. Making sure the goal is manageable is important to accomplishing the goal. If you set a goal that you cannot manage, you will only demoralize yourself and erode your confidence.

Conclusion

Before my fellow colleagues and I retire, it is important for us to provide the next generation of educators with the tools necessary to succeed. I created the Three “M” Philosophy to help faculty members identify and evaluate effective professional and classroom goals in order to motivate them as teachers. Setting meaningful, measurable, and manageable goals provides an individual with direction and a destination. While you may not know what your future entails, you can set goals for how you want your future to develop.

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