

## IDEA REFLECTION

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Although my IDEA forms have been fairly strong and somewhat consistent throughout my time here at Graceland, I will acknowledge that standardized teaching evaluations can present an inaccurate measurement of classroom assessment, as they tend to give preference to instructors who are more popular, lenient or fit certain profiles. I have found regular in-class assessments more helpful in gauging the climate of the class during the semester and beneficial when steering the method in which I offer information throughout the course.

When administering IDEAs, I always ask my students be honest in their evaluation of the course and tell me what truthfully worked well and what was justifiably not effective. I ask them to offer pointed suggestions of how assignments and classroom experiences can work better and let them know that they are helping to steer the future of the course.

I believe in taking pedagogical risks to avoid stagnation and promote new ideas, just as I ask my students to take risks in their work for the same reasons. I let my students know before we take the risk together and ask them to help me evaluate throughout the process. Sometimes these risks are widely successful, and other times we admit defeat. I value trust and honesty in the classroom among all participants and find students to be genuinely excited to embark on new journeys and equally forgiving when these risks do not go as planned. My IDEAs reflect the outcomes of these risks in varying degrees and I appreciate the honest, anonymous constructive feedback.

The following are a sample of evaluations that reflect my character and teaching effectiveness:

- “I feel comfortable talking in this class. What I have to say is always treated like it matters. Examples and resources are helpful, like the applications packets. I’m not sure what else I need to know, but I’ll let you know if I think of something after I hit the job market.”
- “. . . She cares about the community here, naturally. Her positivity is something to look up to. I strive to be like her, as many students do. Her confidence is absolutely beautiful and she is fair with grading and teaching. . .” (Extraction from a larger post)
- “Before I took this class I really didn’t like art. Thank you for being an amazing teacher and teaching me how great art can be and helping me figure out that I can actually do art. This class has been extremely fun and educational.”
- Karen is extremely honest, but in a very constructive and respectful way. She’s always high in energy and ready to help students do their best.”
- “I loved how much you helped each of us individually and truly cared about our worth.”

I’ve used some of the comments from my IDEAs to make substantive changes in my approach to teaching. For example, I’ve learned to be more direct in my expectations of students when giving assignments after receiving several comments asking me to do so, and I have implemented the consistent use of rubrics for major projects to give students a clearer more concise understanding of these expectations. I’ve also significantly altered, and at times eliminated, entire assignments based on feedback and lengthened assignments that students noted were too rushed. I really value constructive feedback and hope I can continue to refine my teaching process as a result.

I think we as instructors are fallible, and that there are semesters when we take on too much service or scholarship (or both) while carrying an overload or dealing with heartbreaking life crises. Likewise, I believe that there are semesters that are golden, when classes are seemingly aligned with each other in every possible way. We live for those classes or semesters, and because teaching is such a deep-seated passion, feel every heartbreak of the difficult times so deeply. My IDEAs reflect these golden times, and have assisted in growth, when growth was needed.