

Teaching Horticulture: Cultivating People Who Cultivate Plants

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Teaching is an employable skill

- Somebody who has not used an HPLC before will hardly be the best candidate for a job where HPLC-based carbohydrate quantitation is needed.

Teaching matters for departments and universities

- The sum of tuition and tax-payer dollars is easily over 50% of university budgets.
- University rankings depend on number and quality of teachers.

Take every opportunity you have to develop yourself as an instructor

- Most comprehensive institutions have training and certificates that graduate students and post-docs can complete for free.
- Volunteering as a teaching assistant is a great way to “peek behind the curtain”.
 - o Teaching and gradings are not the same thing. Anybody evaluating a job application can tell the difference, and so can you.
 - o If possible, take the lead in planning, delivering, and assessing learning from a lecture.
- Professional conferences often have teaching-focused programing. Attending these events is a good way to connect with other instructors and learn about best practices among current faculty.
- Your first teaching opportunities can answer two important questions: Do I like teaching? Should I make this skill part of my professional repertoire?

Think (academically) about your teaching

- What is your concept of teaching and learning?
- What are your goals for your students?
- What are your teaching methods?
- What are your assessment methods?
 - o The answers to these questions make up your teaching philosophy. Most academic jobs that have a formal teaching appointment will require this self-reflection document as a part of your application. Wherever possible, use examples from your teaching.

Search for positions that emphasize teaching

- Non-tenure accruing
 - o Lecturer, Teaching Assistant Professor, Teaching Specialist
 - o The campus discussion about this kind of positions is rapidly evolving. In the near future, we should see clear promotion standards and standard position names.

- Tenure-accruing
 - o Assistant Professor
 - At R1 and land-grant institutions, this usually comes with expectations of teaching hours and quality.
 - At PUI, these positions come with an expectation of high-quality teaching, innovation, and co-curricular activity development
- Extension educator
 - o Audiences could be general or specific. Expectations can include attracting an audience/stakeholder base.

Prepare a demonstration class that showcases the scope of your teaching methods

- Lecturing is the bare minimum. Focus on active learning.
- Engage your audience.
- You should be able to teach this lesson without Power Point.

Once you have a teaching position, document your teaching practice, collaborate with colleagues, and innovate

- Teaching journals can serve the same purpose as lab notebooks. Write down what worked and what did not. Review before you teach the course/lesson again.
- Where possible, help colleagues create teaching materials or lessons that focus on active learning.
- There are countless teaching methods that have yet to be tried in horticulture education. With proper approval (Institutional Review Boards), you can document and publish teaching impacts. HortTechnology is a terrific journal to publish for your scholarship of teaching and learning (SOTL) research.