

DEBRA MAJETIC - TEACHING PHILISOPHY

“Never discourage anyone who continually makes progress, no matter how slow” – Plato

I became an educator much differently than most. My route to the classroom was via an X-ray room. The program director of the School of Radiologic Technology was my mentor, role model and the reason I am an instructor today. When I entered the field, my goal was to make a difference. I quickly realized teaching was self-rewarding. However, the reward is not what I take away from the classroom, but the experiences and knowledge that my students take with them into their careers in radiology.

As a professor in the Radiological Sciences program, I encourage the development of critical analysis to allow students to examine difficult situations they may confront in their careers through “real-world” exercises. For example, I have the students simulate a blind person in a two-part exercise before the students begin their clinical rotations. One student puts on a blindfold and the other leads the student around campus. The students develop a sense of empathy for, and also the importance of specific instructions for, each patient they will care for. In fostering critical analysis, one of my main objectives is to facilitate learning and help the students gain the necessary tools to become active learners and take control of their own learning. Although difficult to project, I insist that my students learn the “why” and not just the “how” of learning. My teaching practices empower students to take ownership of their own education. I encourage students to realize that they are responsible for their own learning outcomes and that they have the potential for success. Recognizing that not all students learn in the same way and that each student brings their own particular brand of learning to the classroom further requires me to adapt to different styles to ensure each student’s success.

Although radiology is a science, imagination and creativity are essential components of the success of my students. I often strive to be imaginative in my classroom and to encourage all students to tackle problems creatively. I believe that creativity helps the students learn and think outside of conventional boundaries. This creativity lends itself to real-life situations that my students encounter in the clinical setting. Because of the design of the Radiological Sciences program, the students are working with real patients in hospitals and outpatient centers by the fourth week of the program. After each new section of the curriculum is delivered, we role play and practice theoretical concepts in our simulator lab on campus so that their clinical skills develop quickly. The seriousness of their learning must be understood and applied from very early in their training. Creativity and imagination help students to adapt to real-life situations, formulate solutions, and meaningfully impact the lives of their patients.

Through my teaching, I encourage students to capitalize on their strengths and to embrace yet overcome their weaknesses. This has become readily apparent in my capstone course when my students are faced with a difficult decision: to enter the workforce or to continue their education. It is my philosophy to empower students with essential knowledge regarding the workforce and the potential to specialize in a particular area. I have found through my teaching that adding continuing education to the portfolio in the capstone course helps students to focus on the bigger picture after graduation. Continuing education is obtained by attendance at conferences, by completing directed readings, through program promotion or by presenting research. Through the capstone course, I help students make real-life decisions and encourage students to pursue their aspirations. Upon graduation, each student will possess skills in patient care, problem solving, critical thinking, research and writing proficiency, and effective communication skills.

I fervently believe that teaching is an important service that I provide and a passion of which I am most proud. I learn as much from my students as they learn from me. I take pride in the fact that each day I am collaborating with students and helping to educate a new generation of healthcare providers in the field of radiology to function knowledgeably in a rapidly changing field with many technological advances. It is not lost on my students that these technological advances will pose new questions and ethical challenges. However, I believe learning is repeating or, in this case, practicing specific responses to specific stimuli until a satisfactory response is achieved. It is a joy and pleasure to serve as a resource to my students and enable them to become the radiology professionals that they aspire to be.