

Teaching Philosophy Statement

I conduct my classes in the same way I run my design studio, tending to ask lots of questions and requiring lots of research from the students. For me more important than the project chosen by a student is the “why” they have selected their project and “can an identified user explain a project back to the student?”.

As a professor I often see myself as a “test-client”, letting the students practice first on me, then on the general public and then on other professors and jurors. I see my job as a professor of one of “letting go”, first giving detailed directions and then over the course of semesters giving less and less information until the students are able to use each other for their critiques.

Since most of my course work is in human-centered design, I tell the students, “it doesn’t matter what I think, what does your user think?”, my comment often gets a groan from the student as they realize they need to go out and research and they often hope that they can “just ask the professor”.

The pleasure of teaching for me is seeing the students realize “that they are not the user” and that the user is their priority, not themselves. For me that is the power of human-centered design, to change people’s days. Often students start by thinking of themselves only then to realize that they don’t know all of the answers and then realizing “what they don’t know”. The power of human-centered design is in the following and trusting of a process that will result in a benefit for the user.

Sincerely,

Mark Walhimer. MID