Most useful advice?

- Challenge students
- Pay yourself first – create or join writing accountability group
- Calibrate yourself – reassess, small incremental changes, manage time
- Set personal boundaries for work and personal life – when at home, at home, set boundaries to take time for yourself
- Don’t try to do too much too soon – have ambitions but don’t take too big of bites too soon
- Choose projects that interest you

What would you do if could relive your 1st year?

- More conscious decisions about how to allocate time, rather than letting others or circumstances dictate it
- Sit in on more classes of colleagues – easy to do, really motivating, doesn’t take much time, helps consistency, opportunity for colleagues to grow together
- Ditto – especially useful for seeing how Learn By Doing looks like in my program
- Keep doing things I was doing before becoming a new professor – exercise, read, things that make you feel at peace
- Agree – we spend too much time micromanaging lectures/adjusting fonts, and instead we should invest more time in how to improve overall – keep the big picture in mind
- First year I was very busy, but students approached me interested in research. I took them on, but then the project went in a different direction and then student finished and now it’s dead in water. I would be more thoughtful on current projects and where to fit students in where I have time so it will help me to be more productive
- Intentionality theme – intentionally seek mentoring from peers rather than accidently finding them. Reach out to others to talk about their general interests, research interests

What did you learn about Cal Poly students and how did it fit with your preconceptions?

- I was surprised at how talented they are – it’s difficult to get in, every single student has their own story (which can add or disrupt discussions). Think
about them not just collectively but also individually in terms of their life journey and development. They struggle as young adults to figure it out.

- Pleasantly surprised that students embrace Learn By Doing. One student told me early in a term that “Were not LBD enough yet!” – they were champing at the bit. It’s nice to see. What you try in the classroom they are willing to try and engage. They enjoy the active approach.

- They could be bored and or unhappy at traditional teaching methods
- They have great energy, ask questions, they meet outside class
- Surprised at how much they read! Refreshing that they are engaged and ready to talk about reading
- High achieving students used to getting As, but I like the learning process. Some come from “What do I need to do to get an A?” They will argue for 2 points. Be prepared for that focus on the grade, and unfortunately not always the learning. We should try to break them out of that.

- I was warned before started that Cal Poly students aren’t the most intellectually curious lot (that what was told). If I’m teaching at an Research 1 university or a liberal arts college I expect lots of curiosity. At Cal Poly no doubt some come for the lifestyle (beach, weather). But I treated my classes as if everyone cared about the big ideas. Students are focused on Learn By Doing and tasks, but many want to get to higher levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy. Not all go there but many do and appreciate it. They are different people. Pay attention to that.

- They can do very great things as researchers. They love the practical, how to do it/make it. Come in wanting LBD but when they learn they need theory too, they are not so enthusiastic.

- Impacted classes, lots of long waitlists, some of them can come across as being entitled that they deserve to be in your class. You’re going to start getting emails from students lobbying for adding to the class. Some try to game the system.

Q&A questions

I heard that they like things tied neatly in bow and what’s the correct answer – what are some strategies for conveying that college and the real world are not always so set and predictable?

- Be upfront about messy nature of real-world
- Goes a lot better when you make it clear to students that the open-endedness that they see in assignments and projects is by design, not because didn’t do it right. It’s on purpose, not just following recipe
- Make learning objectives clear and how evaluation will happen
- Make use of CTLT programs and consultations!

How fill 2-hour lectures?
• Use multiple modes of teaching: small groups, video clips, lecture, so not just two hours of me blabbering. A bit more challenging.
• Short lecture, discussion, have them write a reflection – they often provide lots more info in writing than they would verbally. They love media clips. Have them sign up on discussion schedule where students lead a discussion, as it helps them wrestle with material better than if they only read it.
• Have them come up with multiple choice test questions from reading guides that you might use on tests. They like that.
• Have breaks – 10-15 minutes.
• Sometimes you might finish earlier than two hours but the momentum can fizzle out. So regularly do a wrapup at the end of a lecture to bring it together.

I have lots of ideas for Learn By Doing – what happens when it doesn’t work?

• Just have to own it, find out if the project or activity or assignment is fundamentally flawed or not, and if not then fix it.
• If it’s a good idea that’s just not implemented well, students have good ideas on how to make it work better
• Mid Term chats are an excellent way to better understand what students are thinking about the class and various activities (a service offered by CTLT)
• I got great reviews even thought course was a mess. I knew it was a mess but I was constantly checking in with the students and showing them I cared about their perspective. They really appreciate it.
• They respond well when we show vulnerability by asking “What’s working?” and “What’s not working?”
• Preparation is the key – don’t roll out something new that you thought of on the way to class. Run it past a colleague first, check with others (and CTLT) for resources and ideas to make it work well.

How does Cal Poly emphasize and value diversity on a campus with low diversity classrooms?

• Up front make it clear to students the value of diversity in their careers and in business success. Connect it to career benefits and research findings
• Show them the TED talk on the danger of a single story (link here) early in the class
• Doesn’t come up a lot in AgBiz, it’s a deficiency at Cal Poly and I’m not sure how to fix it
• Beacon mentors – chem and physics thought it wasn’t relevant but lots of ideas, Ag too. Ask colleagues about how I can bring it in.

How responsible are we to address in class events that are happening on campus (e.g., racism, conflict, etc.)? Do we continue with course or should we
take time to engage?

- I recommend talking about it with students briefly at beginning of class.
- CTLT has workshops how to talk with students about issues and events. These incidents affect the entire campus community, students said that they appreciated it when I did this.

How best to set right tone in class (e.g., “We’re all in this together, we’re going to have fun, but be just a little afraid”)?

- Most students are afraid of professors, not sure how to talk to us. They respect authority even when I encourage them to talk with me
- Make expectations clear from outset, and how they will earn their grade. And be OK with letting them know that I won’t know everything and we can work on the questions together
- Students don’t remember what you say on first day or what’s in syllabus. Lay out on first day, but I work to make sure they see me as approachable but not a pushover
- Make sure that they know that not all faculty have same expectations. Set the tone, make sure students understand your expectations.
- Varies widely even within departments how faculty handle classes – some very casual some very strict. Be yourself! Hard to pretend for 10 weeks. Easier to loosen up rather than tighten up over time.
- Consider level of class (e.g., 500 vs 100 level class). More detail needed for 100 level about, say, plagiarism where a simpler “Don’t cheat” might work for 500-level class.