

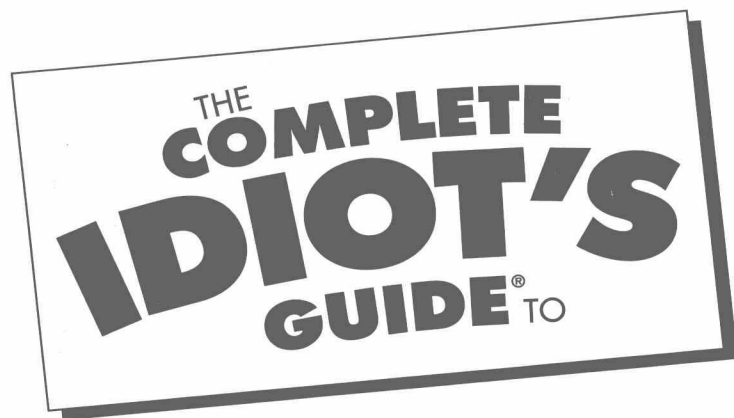
THE  
**COMPLETE  
IDIOT'S**  
GUIDE<sup>®</sup> TO

Engage and inspire  
your students from the  
very first day of class

# Teaching College



Anthony D. Fredericks, Ed.D.



# Teaching College

*by Anthony D. Fredericks, Ed.D.*



A member of Penguin Group (USA) Inc.

*To the memory of my parents, Jim and Virginia Fredericks—my first teachers.*

## ALPHA BOOKS

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# Introduction

After more than two decades of teaching college students, I've come to one inescapable conclusion—no two students and no two courses are ever alike. There is as much variety in classes and students as you'll find in a bag of Halloween candy. And I love it! Each new class has its own personality, just as each student brings a distinctive set of expectations and learning behaviors to the classroom. That's both scary and exciting, and no two days or two semesters are ever the same! For me, teaching college students is one of the most incredible, challenging, and satisfying experiences of my life—and I love it!

I wrote this book for several reasons. The most important was simply because there was a need for a down-to-earth, practical guide that would cut through all the theory and get down to the essential ingredients of effective teaching and effective learning. This is not a textbook overflowing with citations and research, it's a guidebook based on the best thinking of the best college teachers in North America. What you have in your hands is an all-inclusive guide that brings together cutting-edge teaching strategies that guarantee your success as a college teacher. (Sorry, but I can't guarantee promotions or tenure.) There are no long-winded harangues, no boring presentations, and no faded lecture notes. This book was guided by three essential words: *practical, practical, practical!*

Teaching college is filled with unique challenges, unique opportunities, and unique possibilities. My educational philosophy has always been that the best teachers are those who know they have as much to learn as they have to teach. I sincerely hope this guide will provide you with a lifetime of teaching success—now and well into the future. It truly is a most exciting journey!

## How to Use This Book

Becoming a good college teacher is more about process than it is about product. It's about the practical strategies and powerful techniques that engage students in the dynamics of any subject or any topic. It's what works with real students in real classrooms. I've organized this book into six sections to tell you exactly what you need to know. Teaching is always challenging, but learning to be an outstanding college professor doesn't have to be.

**Part 1, "Teaching Undergraduates,"** provides you with an inside look into the nature of college students. You'll discover how they learn and how you can make that learning both effective and memorable.

**Part 2, “Preparing to Teach,”** shows you how to put a course together, how to select the best possible textbook, and how to write a course syllabus that is both detailed and flexible.

**Part 3, “Teaching College: The Nitty Gritty,”** is chock-full of practical ideas and sensible solutions. You’ll discover how to open a course with a bang, how to conduct an effective class, what a good lectures needs, how to engage students in discussions and group work, and how to enhance their thinking abilities.

**Part 4, “Connecting with Students,”** details the specific features students expect from a good learning experience, how you can meet the needs of the diversity of students in your courses, how to effectively teach large classes, and how to deal with the inevitable “problem students” that show up in your courses.

**Part 5, “Challenges and Possibilities,”** discusses how you can effectively evaluate your students, how to plan for meaningful internships and distance learning endeavors, and how to deal with some of the little things (attendance, tardiness, cheating, late papers) that will have an impact on your teaching.

**Part 6, “Life as a College Teacher,”** details how adjunct professors can be successful, the strategies teaching assistants need to know, how to effectively manage an adult education course, and the instructional benefits of course evaluations. You’ll also discover tips and strategies to reduce the stress in your life and plan for a long-term teaching career.

I’ve also provided you with lots and lots of practical resources you can use every day. There’s a glossary of terms used in college teaching, a list of valuable resources and websites, and some sample course syllabi for you to review and emulate. You’ll find all these in the appendixes.

### ... And There's More

In addition to all the practical tips, innovative ideas, and creative strategies throughout this book, I’ve included several sidebars that provide you with even more stuff to help you succeed.



### From the Field

These are the tips, ideas, and advice I've collected from college professors all over North America. They represent a wide range of disciplines and a wide range of experiences, but their words of advice are clear, direct, and thought-provoking.

### "Research Says"

Here you'll discover some of the latest cutting-edge research from some of the leading investigators in the country. The principles of good teaching (and learning) are empirically documented in these boxes.



### Red Flag

There are some things you'll need to be careful with or events you'll need to watch out for. Here you'll learn about some of the cautions of college teaching.

### def•i•ni•tion

Just like any other field, college teaching has its own unique set of terminology and vocabulary. I define some of that lingo for you in clear and simple language in these boxes.

## Acknowledgments

College professors are fortunate to work in a fraternity that supports, encourages, and stimulates its members to achieve and succeed. Authors are no different. In fact, any book (this one included) is never really the sole effort of the author whose name appears on the cover. I have been most fortunate to enjoy the contributions and counsel of an incredible battalion of advisers, colleagues, and friends—all of whom have made this book far better than I could have ever done on my own.

First of all, I would like to salute a coterie of great thinkers and thoughtful practitioners who over the years, and specifically during the research for this book, offered incredible insights, wonderful support, and magnificent ideas—all of which are liberally sprinkled throughout these pages. I celebrate Brian Furio, Michael McGough, Dominic Delli Carpini, Kay McAdams, Jessica Nolan, Mel Kulbicki, and Tim Newman at York College of Pennsylvania for inviting me into their classrooms, their offices, and their philosophies. I am forever indebted for the continuing counsel of Walt Dudley at the University of Hawaii at Hilo. I am deeply honored by the contributions of Kim West, Ed Ransford, Mike Messner, Richard Fliegel, Terry Seip, and Hernan Ramirez at the University of Southern California. Sincere appreciation

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I was equally privileged and honored to visit colleges and universities across the United States to talk with fellow professors, share philosophies and designs, and unabashedly borrow their successes and practical ideas. Educators in California, Arizona, New Mexico, Hawaii, Colorado, Wisconsin, Illinois, Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, New Jersey, Delaware, Pennsylvania, New York, New Hampshire, and Maine opened their offices, classrooms, and minds to share their sage advice and delightful wisdom. I am forever indebted to their spirit, creativity, and dedication to the highest ideals of “professorism.”

Each page of this book reflects a plethora of conversations, deliberations, and discussions with undergraduate students and their instructors over the years. I am fortunate to be able to work in an environment that nurtures good teaching and supports my efforts to seek the wisdom and counsel of others—irrespective of discipline or institution. I have learned much from these interactions as I hope you will in these pages.

I am equally indebted to Kim Lionetti for her continuing support of my writing career. So, too, does Randy Ladenheim-Gil deserve a standing ovation for guiding this manuscript through the “roaring rapids” of the production process.

Once again, my wife, Phyllis, has endured the trials and tribulations of another Complete Idiot's Guide. She certainly deserves long vacations away from the constant hum of the hard drive. So, too, does she deserve my passionate pursuit of all household matters left undone during the writing of this book. As is my love for her, both are now a certainty!

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