

# Ensure Students Are Learning: Faculty Descriptions of Innovative Teaching Practices

## Professional Practice Through Role-Play

### Innovative Teaching Practice Description:

For this innovative teaching practice, the instructor uses a series of role-play activities to help students develop vital professional communications skills. These role-plays take place in a class called “Professional Interactions,” which is specifically designed to prepare students for encounters in a healthcare setting. Each role-play is designed to help students learn and demonstrate both verbal and non-verbal communication techniques that facilitate therapeutic interactions. The instructor uses real-life professional experiences to develop the role-play activities and facilitates impromptu role-plays weekly and peer-reviewed role plays every other week.

The instructor assigns students reading material before class and conducts a brief review of the topic at the beginning of class. After the class has an opportunity to review and discuss the material, students work in pairs to analyze a scenario and practice using a specific technique. The instructor randomly assigns students to pairs using “go-fish” cards. Each student draws a card from the deck and then finds the other person in the class with the matching card. The instructor then hands out laminated scenario cards. Students have 15 minutes to analyze the scenario, plan their role-play, and act it out. For example, students review a scenario in which a therapist makes a treatment note in a patient’s chart that may delay their discharge but the note is questioned by the attending physician who implies that the note should be changed so that

the patient can be discharged that day. The therapist and the physician may demonstrate passive, assertive, or aggressive behavior; students will select one of these response types and act it out with their partner. In this example, the student playing the doctor may demonstrate aggressive behavior and the student playing the therapist may demonstrate assertive behavior. As students work on their role-plays, the instructor walks around the room to engage with each team. The instructor offers feedback or corrects the role play if a portrayal is inaccurate.

The peer-reviewed role-plays provide students the opportunity to engage in peer instruction while practicing professional evaluation. The instructor randomly assigns students into pairs and assigns each pair a specific communication activity that aligns with a general content area. For example, if the general topic is administrative communication, the instructor asks students to demonstrate an exchange between an employee and supervisor while demonstrating chaos in the workplace. Unlike the weekly role-plays where students act out a prescribed scenario, students develop their own five-minute scenario based on the general content area and the communication activity assigned. Each pair then acts out their scenario in front of the class. The other students in the class complete a peer evaluation for each role-play. These evaluations help prepare students for the peer and supervisor evaluations they will be required to complete in the workplace. The instructor asks the students rating the role-play to carefully consider the requirement of the

assignment and to offer an explanation for their score. The evaluations are based on five requirements: (1) whether or not the role-play lasted five minutes, (2) how well students demonstrated the technique, (3) the degree to which the scenario was easy to follow, (4) the engagement level of each actor, and (5) the level of professionalism demonstrated throughout the role-play. The peers grade each requirement on a zero to five scale. The peer-reviewed role play is worth 100 points, of which up to 50 points come from the peer evaluations and the other 50 points come from the instructor's evaluation.

The final activity is a six-minute recorded role-play that students present in class. For this activity, the instructor assigns students to groups composed of approximately four students. Unlike the prior role-plays, this activity is a cumulative role-play in which students create a scenario that demonstrates communication techniques and concepts learned throughout the course. The instructor notes that the scenarios should include concepts such as non-verbal techniques, non-technical communication, different types of tone and behavior, etc. The

instructor assigns students to enact the scenes in an appropriate setting and to incorporate costumes. Using the created scenario, student groups record a three-minute segment demonstrating non-therapeutic communication and a three-minute segment demonstrating therapeutic communication. Groups sign up for a presentation slot in advance and are allotted ten minutes to show their recorded role-play and engage the student audience in a discussion about each segment. The full video is six minutes long and the instructor allots two minutes of discussion time after students present each segment. The instructor asks the student audience to provide constructive feedback and ask questions during the discussion periods. This activity also has a two-part peer evaluation process; the class provides a written evaluation, and the students also write a peer evaluation for each of their group members. This activity is worth 20% of the overall course grade.