

Todd Von Deak, DBA, CAE - Statement of Teaching Philosophy

My teaching philosophy is grounded in the belief that students don't just absorb knowledge — they build it. I design learning experiences that help them figure out who they are, what they value, and how to navigate the world beyond the classroom. Especially in the early semesters, students are developing not just academic skills but also a sense of confidence, identity, and connection to the institution. My courses are built to strengthen all three.

I view faculty as playing a critical role in both **student retention and institutional culture-building**. My classroom is designed to deliver content and rigor, and create a sense of collective momentum and belonging. When students feel capable, connected, and seen, they're more likely to thrive.

To support this, I cultivate a high-expectation, high-structure environment rooted in three behavioral standards: **Be an Adult**, **Play Up**, and **Take One More Step**. These aren't motivational slogans — they're embedded in daily practice. They shape how students engage with each other, approach challenges, and embrace personal growth. Together, they foster a classroom culture that mirrors professional realities and prepares students to meet them with confidence.

My pedagogy emphasizes **active learning**, **scaffolded development**, and **translational application**. Students engage with real tools, real deliverables, and real stakes — from company reports and peer-reviewed presentations to consulting simulations. Learning is recursive: students encounter a concept, test it in practice, reflect on the outcome, and then build again. This cycle not only deepens understanding but makes learning personal, portable, and sticky.

Assessment in my courses moves beyond recall. I prioritize projects and reflections that require students to apply knowledge in context, build self-awareness, and develop professional habits. Class time is flexible but purposeful, balancing clear structure with the space needed for discussion, iteration, and feedback. Over the semesters, I've seen this model lead to stronger student engagement and better-than-expected academic performance, particularly among those still adjusting to college life.

I've taught across undergraduate and graduate settings — from business strategy and nonprofit leadership to branding, consulting, and professional development. I've designed and piloted new courses, partnered with industry experts, and facilitated learning experiences for first-year students and mid-career professionals alike. Nearly every course I teach includes interaction with practitioners, alumni, or executive partners to help students connect what they're learning with who they're becoming.

For me, teaching is where **strategy meets empathy**. It's not about covering content — it's about building capability. It's about walking alongside students until they no longer need you to, and celebrating when they realize they're ready.