

Education for Adaptation and Change

First for our students
Then for me

The characteristics all deal with lasting things

One lasting thing is that all things change - some quickly, some exceeding slowly

Firesign Theater “Everything you know is wrong” - 1970s humour
Arthur C. Clarke: “If an elderly but distinguished scientist says that something is possible he is almost certainly right, but if he says that it is impossible he is very probably wrong.”

Almost everything we teach in science will change in a graduate’s career

Genetics
Continental drift
DDT
Vacuum tubes
Slide rules

If you can’t make the move from slide rules to calculators you are in trouble

Beyond knowing things are going to change

Have to have skills to know when there is a real change

Googling isn’t enough

We have to give students the skills to decide whether a change is real or not - these were found on the web this week: one or more may not be true:

“God created the universe on Oct 3, 4004 BC at 9 AM
“Apricot pits cure cancer”
“The country is run by shape-changing reptiloid aliens”
“The bible is based on myths describing ancient astronauts”
“Species were created by evolution, not by God”

Have to know when an argument is based on facts which will probably ultimately be proven wrong or on wishful thinking, errors, or outright lies

My experience with change

Early experience was the Army and Graduation from a small Christian College (for small Christians)... Juniata College affiliated with the Church of the Brethren

The Army pushed action after consideration
taking responsibility ... especially
taking responsibility for action
nobody else to blame

College pushed its own version of education for adaptation and change
Critical thinking
Taking intellectual responsibility
Knowing everything you know is wrong

Started out as a radio announcer and records specialist ... a technician (5 years)
worked alone
no social interaction

Then had to adapt to being a faculty member (20 years)
Talking to groups
Tell people what to do - and grade them
The external environment changed
Catalog cards to electronic records
9 months contract rather than 12

Then adapt to being a manager of a Univ IS dept team (9 years)
Set hours
12 months
Get people to work together (can't tell them what to do)
One step removed from the customers
Tech problems have solutions (if the money is there) ... This is good.
"It's a lucky man whose problems can be solved with money." - my mother
Not a public University
Budgeting entirely different
Public: no connection between enrollment and budget
Private: 24 students makes budget difference of \$300,000

Then adapt to being Provost (2 months)
Only problems

Problems which don't have solutions (any decision makes
someone unhappy
Work with faculty (who have tenure)
Don't do anything *myself*

Soon
Adapt to retirement

Larry Osborne
Chaminade University
Provost [retired]