Advancing critical thinking transcript

All right, everyone. Let's jump into another one of these deep dives.

Um, today we're talking all about enhancing critical thinking.

Yeah, super important stuff, right?

Oh, absolutely. And you know, we're lucky to have this fantastic resource from our own colleagues. It's an article um and it's actually from the level up, a mid-career guide for faculty.

Nice.

So, you written by faculty for faculty and I think this is super valuable.

I agree. And it's on the center for faculty excellence website, by the way. So, you know, easy to access.

Absolutely.

And this deep dive is going to help unpack some of the key takeaways from this article and I'm hoping give everyone listening some really practical advice.

That's the goal.

Yeah. So, before we even get into specific strategies, you know, one thing that really stood out to me in this article was the emphasis on self-reflection.

Yes.

As instructors, right?

Absolutely.

Like, we need to be thinking critically about our own teaching practices before we can expect our students to do the same.

It's so true. It's like that whole you know, physician heal thyself kind of.

Exactly.

Right. And it's not always easy. Um, but it's so essential.

It is. So, what are some of the questions we should be asking oursel? Like, what are some of those self-reflection kind of points?

Yeah. I mean, I think a big one is, are we really encouraging debate in our classrooms? You know, are we creating a space where students feel comfortable challenging viewpoints, even our own?

It's so easy to fall into that sage on the stage kind of role. Right. Where

it is and it's comfortable.

It's so comfortable.

It's easier. It's easier, but that doesn't mean it's better.

Right. Right. Exactly. So, I like that they go beyond just sort of like this theoretical we should all be encouraging critical thinking. They actually give some very practical strategies. They do.

And one that jumped out to me that I've always been a big fan of is case studies. Um I think those are fantastic. I'm curious to get your take on why those are so powerful.

Yeah, case studies I think are so effective because they present these messy real world situations, right, where there's not always a clear right answer, you know, and students have to really analyze information, think about different perspective, and then make a decision. It's not just about memorizing facts, you know, it's about applying knowledge.

And often times, you know, you're working with incomplete information or conflicting information.

Yeah. Absolutely. Which is exactly what they're going to encounter in the real world.

Oh, absolutely. And it's teaching them those critical thinking skills, but in a way that's applied and engaging. You know, another one they mentioned, which I think everybody is probably familiar with at least in theory is debates. You know that classic debate structure.

Sure.

But I'm curious, you know, have you seen debates go well and go poorly? And what are some tips for making sure that they're actually achieving that critical thinking goal?

Oh, for sure. I mean, debates can be amazing, right? Yeah.

If they're structured well, they can really force students to think on their feet, to articulate their thoughts clearly. But, you know, sometimes they can backfire. Totally. Some times they get dominated by a few loud voices or they devolve into these like superficial arguments, you know?

Yeah.

So, I think the key if you're going to use debates is to really teach students how to debate effectively, right? Like it's not just about having an opinion. It's about knowing how to listen to other people's opinions.

It's about Yeah. respectfully disagreeing.

Exactly. Exactly. Building on other people's ideas, you know, all that good stuff.

Right. Now, the article also touched on technology a little bit. Yeah.

And I know this is something that comes up a lot in discussions of teaching and learning and it's like a double-edged sword in some ways. So, what are your thoughts on using technology effectively to enhance critical thinking?

I think the biggest thing to remember is that technology should always be a tool. It should never replace the human element. You know, our role as educators, it's not about just throwing tech at a problem and expecting it to magically solve everything. Right.

Right. Um, you know, for example, AI tools can be really help right? Like for personalizing learning or providing feedback,

but you have to be so careful because they can also perpetuate biases if we're not really thoughtful about how we're using them.

Oh, absolutely. Absolutely.

So, I think it's all about using technology intentionally, you know, having a clear purpose in mind and being critical about the tools that you're using.

Now, have you explored the AI learning lab on campus?

I have not, but I've heard such great things and it's definitely on my list to check out.

Oh, yeah. It's a fantastic resource. And you this kind of brings up another point that the article really emphasizes the power of feedback, you know, and not just feedback from us to students, but feedback from students to us and feedback from our peers.

Oh, absolutely. I mean, student feedback is so valuable, right? I mean, whether it's through like a formal course evaluation or just, you know, informal check-ins during class, getting that student perspective can help us identify areas where we can improve, right?

You know, what's working, what's not working, and then, you know, feedback back from our peers, our colleagues is just so valuable.

Oh my gosh.

You know, sometimes you just need that fresh perspective, right?

Totally. Have you checked out the communities of practice that the Center for Faculty Excellence puts on?

I have.

It's like my favorite thing ever.

They are so good. Such a supportive environment. Lots of great ideas being shared. Really inspiring. And speaking of inspiration, you know, the article also talks about the importance of a growth mindset.

Oh yes.

And not just for our students, but for ourselves as educators. You know, we have to model that lifelong learning, that willingness to embrace challenges and keep growing.

You know, I think about when I was first learning about brief engaging anecdote about a personal intellectual struggle and it was such a struggle for me and I really had to kind of push through that and figure it out. But you know what? It ultimately made me a so much better teacher because I had that experience and I could relate to those students who are struggling.

Absolutely. I mean, that's such a great example of how challenges can really lead to growth.
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right and there are so many resources out there to help us keep learning and growing. You know the employee or dependent scholarship program here at UNO is fantastic.

Yeah, for sure.

And then all those free online platforms like Corsera and ADX, you know, the opportunities are really endless.

They are. So, as we wrap up here, you know, what's the one thing that you really want our listeners to take away from this deep dive?

I think the biggest takeaway is that fostering critical thinking is not just about teaching a specific set of skills. It's about cult cultivating this culture of inquiry and curiosity in our classrooms.

You know, helping students develop that love of learning that will stay with them long after they graduate. That's beautiful. And if you are listening and you want to dive deeper into this because we just scratched the surface, you can read that full level up publication which has lots of other great articles from faculty and the center for faculty excellence website. It's definitely worth a look.