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25 March 2024

To: Jia-Wei Tay, Plant and Environmental Protection Sciences

From: Dr. Hazel Gedikli, Center for Teaching Excellence

Re: Classroom Observation of PEPS 421: Foundations of Pest Management
13 students in class, Gilmore Hall 306

Thank you very much for inviting me to your PEPS 421: Foundations of Pest Management class on March 25 to observe your teaching at your request. Following are my comments based on my in person classroom observation that I organized around two general areas:

- What appears to be helpful to students' learning?
- What are some recommendations and suggestions for change?

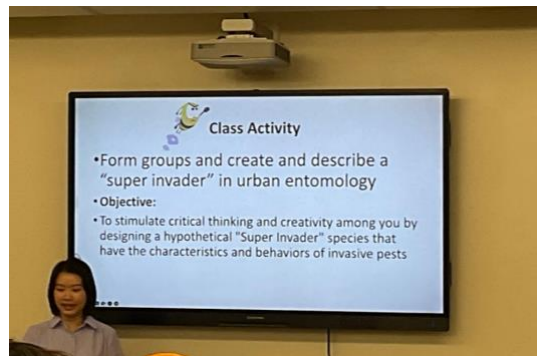
These questions are drawn from our diagnostic services—Small Group Instructional Diagnosis (SGID) and Paper & Pencil—to stimulate responses from students regarding their experiences of a course and are a good basis for a classroom observation by a consultant.

What was observed that appeared to support learning?

- You started the class with a good morning and did a bit of chit-chat with students, asking them how their spring break was.
- After this friendly check-in, you proceeded to introduce the subject of the day which was “Challenges and Future Perspectives in Urban IPM.” Previously, you had covered termites, and the species you introduced was red imported fire ants. The class time mostly focused on the challenges in management of these invasive species.



- About 20 minutes into the class, you moved on to a group activity which you designed for students to practice their knowledge of invasive species; students were asked to come up with an imaginary “super invader” species. You had the activity outlined and objectives spelled out on a slide. They worked in groups of three for approximately 12 minutes. It was obvious that they were engaged and having fun. At the end of their given time, each group presented the species they came up with. It was great to see that some students got creative and had fun with the activity. Students directed some questions to each other as well. You also asked groups questions that were meant to urge them to think critically about the species they created. It was important that the activity came in the middle of the class time rather than through the end; students appeared even more engaged in your lecture following the conclusion of the activity.



- Students appeared attentive and relaxed during the class time. They asked questions without being prompted, carefully listened to you, and enthusiastically participated in the activities you had planned for the day.

- You periodically checked in with students to see if they had any questions. You were responsive to their questions and made sure that you adequately answered their questions. Students also felt comfortable asking each other questions and they did that organically without a set structure. It was by encouraging students to ask their questions any time and having a conversational teaching style that you fostered interaction among students in the classroom.
- You were well prepared and organized for the class. Throughout the observed class time, you explained everything in detail, providing lots of examples and visual aids which were meant to facilitate students' understanding. You asked questions and encouraged students to be closely involved in the learning process. You did all these all with ease and the class flowed smoothly.

Recommendations

Please keep in mind that classroom observations are only a snap shot featuring a course-in-progress, at a moment in the semester at which certain features will be apparent. But perhaps others are not in play at that moment, therefore it is not unusual for recommendations to bring up features that may already be a part of the teaching and learning, but which are not present on the day of the visit. To the extent that it may, the following can serve as a reminder or as validation to continue with good teaching practices:

- You have a very calm and friendly presence in the classroom which automatically puts your students at ease and this state is very conducive to their learning. You also communicate with your students as your equals and demonstrate your care for their learning. Since you expressed your intent to be more proactive in terms of classroom management, I believe that to that end your friendly demeanor would be best complemented by clear ground rules and class policies. These could be related to device use, discussion guidelines, late policy, etc. In any case, you would have the best response from students if these rules are 1) spelled out in your syllabus, 2) enforced from the first day of class and consistently, 3) explained to students in terms of their reasoning. You could even spend some time in the beginning of each semester discussing and establishing some of these rules with your students such as classroom community expectations during discussions, group work, etc.
- Related to my previous comment, feel free to remind students to be respectful and listen to each other. There were occasional side conversations in the classroom which were not too disruptive and yet students often find those behaviors distracting and expect instructors to address them in a timely manner.

Additional Evaluative Resources

My comments are based on a single viewing of only one class period and as such, it is not possible to know if your students are experiencing difficulties that were not apparent to me. If you have not done so already, you might solicit anonymous feedback from them using one of the following tools. If you haven't already, you could:

- Request a Student Group Instructional Diagnosis (SGID) from the Center for Teaching Excellence. A CTE evaluator will visit your class for 50-75 minutes and after you introduce them to students organized in small groups and leave the classroom, will engage students with three questions on what is helping them learn and what recommendations they would make. The consultant and you then meet to review student responses. See [Teaching Assessment | Small Group Instructional Diagnosis](#).
- Alternatively, conduct a Paper and Pencil Mid-Semester assessment. CTE will provide a master copy of comment forms (Google Form) with three questions which you will email to students. Students will individually and anonymously answer questions about what is helping them learn and what recommendations they would make. Student comments will be collected by CTE and subsequently shared with you to review. See [Teaching Assessment | Paper and Pencil Assessment](#).

Conclusion

I think it will be evident from this document that it was a pleasure to observe your teaching and have had time together in consultation to elaborate further. Thank you again for inviting me and I look forward to working with you again in the future.