

Christopher Krejci, Ph.D.
Claudia and W.T. Barnhart Teacher of the Year Award
Board of Trustees Presentation Transcript
Monday, October 17, 2022 at 6:00 p.m.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak with you this evening. And thank you to my colleagues for selecting me as teacher of the year and to my mentors at Temple College who have provided me with opportunities to grow into the professor I am today.

I want to share two things students have taught me, each of which can be summarized in two words:

1. Trust students.
2. Say yes.

Trust students:

- Trust that students want to learn.
- Trust that students are trying their best given their individual circumstances and challenges.
- Trust students even when they have not demonstrated that they, quote, "deserve trust."
- Here is an example of what this type of trust looks like for me:
 - A student emails me about something I think is obviously stated in the syllabus or asks about something in class that I just finished explaining.
 - Rather than assume the student didn't read the syllabus or wasn't listening in class, I trust that the student is struggling to locate the information, or that I didn't explain myself clearly.
 - I might start by saying, "Thank you for giving me an opportunity to clarify myself. I want to be clear, and often think that I am being clear, so it really helps when students ask questions like this . . . Then, I tell students the information and how to locate it, or I explain the concept again.
 - For me, this does a few important things:
 - It validates students and their experiences by demonstrating that I really want them to ask questions and that I will take ALL of their questions and ideas seriously.
 - It empowers students by signaling to them that we are community of learners growing together and that their input is necessary in order for all of us to be successful.
 - And finally, it models a growth mindset—that it takes work to communicate ideas clearly and effectively, that we can all improve our written and oral communication skills through feedback and revision processes.

Trusting students does not take a lot of preparation and neither does saying yes.

Say yes to students:

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Here are a few very short examples of what saying yes looks like for me:

1. A student who fails a major essay assignment approaches me after class and says, “I didn’t understand the guidelines, but after reading your feedback I have a better idea about what I was supposed to do. Can I revise my essay?”—I answer, “yes!”

2. A student who missed a low-stakes writing assignment emails me and says, “I just wanted to let you know that I didn’t complete the assignment last night because . . .
 - My internet went out,
 - My daughter was sick,
 - I was called into work,If possible, can I have an extension?”— I answer, “yes!”

3. A student who comes to class early says, “I was really interested in the topic we discussed last week. I know it’s not listed as an option for the research paper assignment, but I was wondering if it is something I could do?”—Again, I answer, “yes!”

I am unable to count the number of times my teachers, professors, colleagues, and mentors trusted me or said yes to me when it mattered most, and I am certain I would not be here today if this had not been the case.

I hope that when students leave Temple College doors will be open to them because we trusted our students and said yes to our students when it mattered most.