

Christopher Richmann: Welcome to Professors Talk Pedagogy, a podcast from the Academy for Teaching and Learning at Baylor University. I'm your host, Christopher Richmann. Professors Talk Pedagogy presents discussions with great professors about pedagogy, curriculum, and learning, in order to propel the virtuous cycle of teaching. As we frankly and critically investigate our teaching, we open new lines of inquiry. We engage in conversation with colleagues and we attune to students experiences. All of which not only improves our teaching, but enriches and motivates ongoing investigation. And so the cycle continues. Today, our guest is Dr. Laine Scales, professor in the Diana R. Garland School of Social Work at Baylor University. Dr. Scales has served in many roles at Baylor, including teaching on the faculty at the School of Education, facilitating Baylor's Summer Faculty Institute, and for many years as Associate Dean in the Graduate School focusing on graduate student professional development. In 2016, Dr. Scales was named a Baylor Master Teacher, the university's highest recognition for Teaching Excellence. We are delighted to welcome Dr. Scales to the show to discuss authenticity and teaching, relating to your students as whole people, and much more.

CR: Well, Laine Scales, thank you so much for joining our show today. It's a pleasure to have you on.

Laine Scales: Thanks Christopher. It's great to be here. I love to see that the ATL is branching out into podcasting.

CR: Yes, we're trying some new things during this pandemic era where we're trying to connect with folks and still have the conversations that we sorta, we wish, wish we could have over coffee and lunch with our colleagues, but this is perhaps a reasonable substitute for that. I'd like to begin just by asking you to say a bit about your, your own career in teaching. What are the roles, the settings in which your own teaching has developed? How do you, how do you sort of tell that story?

LS: Yes, sure. So like many faculty, I began teaching in college as a grad student, as a doctoral student at the University of Kentucky. And I had some wonderful mentors and guides. And many of my guides were other doctoral students who had gone before me, and shared tips, just sort of in the office in an informal setting. But it was through that experience that I really learned the power of a "conversation community" or a "learning community" some call it, for faculty members to just have a place to talk together. And then after I graduated, the rest of my career has been a balance of administration and teaching. So I've had faculty roles in which a big part of my day, I might be released 50% or something from my teaching to do administration. So I went to Palm Beach Atlantic College in West Palm Beach, Florida and ran a service learning program for all of the students there--they're undergraduates were required. I went there as an ABD before I finish my PhD, but also taught, taught in sociology and what we call Christian Social Ministries. Went to Stephen F. Austin State University from there, and was already in Texas when my dear teacher and mentor, Diana Garland came to Baylor in '97, '98, somewhere in there. And she came to Baylor to start a master's in social work. And because she had been my teacher and I had learned so much from her, in fact, really been inspired to teach by, by Diana, I wanted to come and join. And so a new program meant, new faculty lines. And so I came in 1999 to Baylor, and came first to the School of Social Work. But because I have this strange thing that my master's in social work, but my doctorate is in higher education--So I've actually served on the faculty of higher education and our School of Education for about a decade as well. So those two schools would be my home schools. And then a role that I took on and as I got into faculty development, was working with doctoral students who are what we call "future faculty." And that came through an administrative role as Associate Dean in Baylor's graduate school. And again, and a new program, we didn't really have much in place. Departments were doing

things, but we didn't have much across the university. And Larry Lyon, the dean, had a great vision for developing our doctoral students in that way to become future faculty. And that would be, my role, is helping them learn to teach. The role quickly expanded into other Student Life kinds of things, such as graduate student housing and organizations and clubs and programs on faith and learning. So it grew. But I did that until just recently in the last couple years, I've returned as a faculty member to the School of Social Work, which is where I serve now.

CR: We all as, as any good teacher knows, we learn by teaching. I'm wondering what you learned about the professoriate and about teaching from helping graduate students evolve into those and develop into those roles?

LS: Yes. Well, you know, as I first began that work, which was around 2004, I believe, I spent a lot of time just remembering what it was like to be that doctoral student. I found the same things I went through-- That's what our doctoral students are facing. There's a lot of pressure because you, you're in a doctoral program, you're trying to prove yourself. You're, you're young, you're facing all of these challenges. And then when you go into the classroom often with very little experience, there's pressure from your peers and from the department, from the undergrad students themselves to do a good job. And, and yet often you haven't had much preparation. You're, you're imitating what you've seen others do. So just to go back and remember that sense of desire to do a great job, an earnestness, to want to learn to do this, lack of preparation. So that inspired me to find the best tools, the best readings, the best opportunities that we could provide for students to, to learn and prepare themselves. So learning about their vulnerability.

And then I feel like one of the most important lessons that I did not learn as a doctoral student. It took me much longer--I didn't learn until I had been a faculty member for quite some time--was to, to find your authentic self, to find your own way of packaging your gifts and the things that you're good at and turning that into a teaching self--If that makes sense. I think we imitate the teachers we've seen and in my graduate work--so I went to a seminary where the teachers were silver haired men over 50 who stood at the front of the room and expounded on the very wise things they've learned in their scholarship. And when I tried to imitate that, I would fall short. Because I am, I am not a gentleman and a scholar by any means. And so I floundered in my early days to try to figure out--I knew I couldn't imitate that. Well, what do I have? You know, who is Laine Scales and what does she have that can be packaged into a teaching purpose? So figuring that out came late to me. If I could do one thing for doctoral students, it would be start them on that journey earlier and help them in their doctoral years figure out their things that they bring. And so that's a lot of what my classes, my workshops, my conversations, my mentoring with doctoral students is about. "What are your if your particular things that you do well and, and how do we develop your teaching style from that?"

CR: One of the activities that I love doing with faculty and in faculty development workshops is--which are mentioned here, teaching styles. There's a number of different rubrics and types of literature to, to categorize this. But the one that I've used this, is Anthony Grasha, who wrote in the '90s about teaching styles and the ways that styles can overlap and that sort of thing. But the takeaway is always that there's, there's not one right way to do teaching. There are strengths and weaknesses to every, every style that you, that a particular instructor might bring. And it's more just about self-awareness of those, of those things.

LS: Yes.

CR: So I also think about this issue of authenticity and I've been, I've been pondering this more too. For those of us who do any reading in the scholarship of teaching and learning, there is this increasing tendency towards best-practices or evidence-based teaching. And I'm beginning to sense in my own self a bit of tension between that push towards best practices and authenticity as you're, as you're putting it here too. So I'm wondering if you if you feel that tension too or how are how you might resolve that?

LS: Yes, that's a great, a great question. I think you're right, that we need to be freed from this idea that there is one way of doing it. And yet people who have found a good way become evangelical about it. And everybody wants to share their way as if it's the best way, and maybe it is the best way for them. But, you know, a book that's been out a while now, Ken Bain's *What the Best College Teachers Do*. I think books like that and articles like that free us from that idea that there's, there's one best practice. Because what, what Bain does and you, the title could be a little bit misleading. *What the Best College Teachers Do*--you think, oh, there's a recipe. Let me open this book and see what the recipe is. And what Bain does is he shows us many different ways of teaching. And all of these—he interviews award-winning teachers. And they're all so different. They're so different in how they execute and how they plan, and how they respond to students. They--he pulls out some themes, some things they have in common. But that book, and I usually always try to get that in the hands of doctoral students or something like that. That, that frees us from the idea that there is a, you know, a “best practice.” So I would, you know, in that tension, I would resist the best practices. That's not to say we can't, we certainly need to come together and have conversation about “what's working for me. And I want to share it with you.” But let's not, let's not label too many things “best.” Because the other thing is the changing nature of the, you know, the trends and so forth. So what was considered best in the 1990-- when I started up with faculty development might not be considered best today.

CR: And speaking of award-winning teachers, you are too modest to mention this when you, when you began talking, but you have been named a Baylor Master Teacher here at Baylor University. I think this is what, 2016, is that right?

LS: Yes. Yes.

CR: So say a little bit about what, what that award means to you personally and if, and if you've got other thoughts about what kind of what teaching awards do, what their purpose is in the academy?

LS: Yes. Yes. So I don't know if our listeners have any background on what the award is, but it's, it's given every four years, so it's not given yearly. But it is Baylor's I guess pinnacle award for Teaching. And I had heard about it ever since I first came to Baylor 21 years ago. And the legendary teachers who were called “master teacher,” people like Anne Miller, Jim Vartamon. And then I went to church with two master teachers, Bob Baird and Tom Hanks. And so I felt privileged to, to see them teaching Sunday school. These are wonderful churchman, in addition to being a wonderful Baylor teachers. And I saw them teaching in a very different context. So I'd always heard about this, these legendary people and knew some of them. So, you know, there's, there's this immediate experience of being so honored to be counted among them.

But I think what it did for me and what awards can do is it, it set me about my next challenge. That's not to say I've mastered everything there is about, about teaching, but it's like, okay, this is, this is quite an honor. What can I explore next? And for me, it was right around that time that I set my new goal as being

online teaching. I sort of stumbled into online teaching. I'm, I'm not a person who embraces technology. I thought it was probably something for young people. But Baylor really was going to expand it's a graduate student or young graduates programs in online frontier. And I was curious about it. What really drove me to try it was I was teaching doctoral students. And when they graduated, they were almost always going into something where they would have to teach an online class. Some of them were already doing it, again with no preparation. Their Alma mater would call them up and say "you're a doctoral student at Baylor when you teach online for us?" And I felt like I needed to know, I needed to be able to equip them. So I called John Singletary, Dean of the School of Social Work and I said, Do you, do you have a class that you would let me teach online? And he trusted me and I worked really hard to learn everything I could. I taught myself. I did my first semester, lots and lots of reading and talking with others. And by the end of that semester, it had turned out pretty well. And and I thought "this is something that I enjoy so much more than I thought I would." And I felt prepared to help others to do it. And so now I'm in this, this sort of new phase of not only teaching online myself, but breaking into faculty development, of helping other teachers who are teaching online. I do that in the School of Social Work. That's part of my official role and an administrative role there. But I also am starting to do that across, across campus, as you know, often in partnership with the ATL.

CR: So what are you learning from faculty who are teaching online? What are their concerns? What are their, what are their successes?

LS: Well, as you know, with the pandemic, we've had a huge influx of online teachers and many who, who had to suddenly do this in the middle of the spring semester without preparation. There's been a bit of a panic about it. But what that's brought is a, a large desire and interest for people to know about it and to be equipped. So the opportunity has been, has been wonderful.

I experimented with something this summer called the Online Teaching Commons. I had been doing this in the School of Social Work and we opened it up to Baylor faculty. And what the, the commons is, is as a space to talk about what we're doing. And it's also, It's not just what I've tried that works, but what I'm worried about and what I'm afraid to try. And then as a group in that community conversation it always comes back to that. We, we bolster each other up. We give each other tips and hints, and then give each other courage to try something and then come back next week and tell us how it went.

And so I think the thing that, that people worry a lot about in online teaching is how do I build relationships? This is particularly true for, for teachers. And I am one of them that feel, feel like their best teaching comes out of a relationship with their students, but also their students' peer to peer relationships with each other. And people cannot envision how this is done online. For me, in the School of Social Work, we, we hold synchronous meetings every week. So we come to class on Zoom. We are together face to face. And that, that touchpoint is key to building relationships. But a lot of it that I've just had to figure out and I'm helping others figure out, is, how do we use online spaces in between class? And maybe during our synchronous class as well? How do we give over some of the time on from, from our content and spend it on getting to know one another? All of those ways that we've, we've kinda experimented with, helped to build relationship. That to me has been some of the greatest concern for people. And Baylor is a great place--as you know, we have wonderful resources and people who were teaching us and mentoring us to do that well.

CR: We've said this before, but it really, in so many ways the teaching online really comes down to intentionality. You can't take for granted those things that used to support your teaching, especially when it comes to relationships. I mean, in face-to-face courses, students, they come to class, they're there for five or ten minutes before class starts and they're having their conversations, they're developing relationships there, reminding each other of due dates and things like that. And that just doesn't happen online unless the instructor intentionally creates those spaces or those prompts for those relationships and conversations to develop.

LS: Yes.

CR: You mentioned a little bit before about your, your own kind of slow revelation about authenticity in your, in your teaching. Have there been any other major turning points in your practice of teaching, your approach to teaching?

LS: Hmm. I'm not sure I would call it as much a turning point as much as sort of a time of tremendous growth for me. Around the mid 2000s, I took on several things at once, various roles at Baylor, that really became just a space of fertility for me. Again, back to conversations. But I moved into the residence hall with my family. We lived in [inaudible], a freshman residence hall. And our family lived there for six years. And this was the experiment, this was sort of the beginning of it of Dr. Frank Shoeshock. The idea of faculty and residents acknowledges that, you know, we don't just roll up the carpets of the campus when the faculty members drive out of the parking lot at 5PM. That learning continues and opportunities to be with students continue. If you want to be a part of this, it's not for everyone, but if you do, here's these residential opportunities. And so that was an extremely fertile time. And I had conversations about this rather new challenge--I had not done anything like that before--with people in student life. And, and we began to do some research and publication around this idea of residential learning.

About the same time I took on a study abroad--Baylor in Oxford--directing that program, which had a similar dynamic of being with students as whole people all day, every day, through every mood, through every stress, and through the joys as they discover a new country and new cultures. So much learning there. This was about the same time I began teaching doctoral students and developing future faculty. So just an amazing time of fertility. And I would think, I think the theme that kind of came through all of that is, is something I've read about an understood intellectually, but I could see it more every day. The idea of students as *whole people*. And that if I'm, if I'm going to deal with them as a teacher, many teachers do simply see them in the classroom, consider their intellectual selves and their, their brains. And, and that's it. There's a boundary there. Whereas what students long for and what I think the best teachers do is to approach this as a, as a human being with many, many facets, including their spiritual and social selves and, and their developmental stage. You know, the, the, the pleasure I had in those years was I was living with undergraduates, teaching master students, doing faculty development with doctoral students. And so I had the whole range. And today's undergraduate student is tomorrow's doctoral student if they stick around Baylor long enough. To see that development--an incredibly fertile time. And I've, I've transitioned out of most of those programs, but I've taken with me wonderful reflections and memories and lessons I think from, from that are very fertile time.

CR: Many of the conversations that we're having about teaching during the pandemic, I think, can be summed up in this theme of, of thinking about students as, as, as you say as whole people. Even when you get to something as sort of logistic or technical as "do I require my students to show their camera when

they're zooming into a class?" And then that implies all these kinds of questions about, about privacy, about where those students are at when they're in class. Because then you really, as a teacher, you really start to realize they're not just brains on a stick, right? They have environments all their own. They have families, they have situations that they are part of, they have ecosystems that they are a part of, that are not directly related to this, to this class. And I see, I see good, good points made in many directions on that, that evolving discussion about students showing their webcams on, on Zoom classes. But when you mentioned that about seeing students as whole people, that's what came to mind for me.

So have there been, as you think about your gears of teaching, have there been teaching approaches or techniques, techniques that you've tried that just sort of like fell flat, that just did not work either for student learning or for you as an instructor? I mean, you mentioned trying to trying to imitate the wise gentlemen scholar, and that just was not you. Are there any other things that you use you did earlier in your career that you just don't do now?

LS: Hmm. Yeah, that's, that's a great question. Well, I'll go back to Diana Garland, who was my teacher as a master's student. And one of the things that made Diana so fun is she would take risks. You know, she would just try anything. And sometimes you felt silly carrying out a role-play or, you know, something that she would set up for our learning. But then after it was over and everybody had stopped feeling silly about it and we had done it together, she would have this very profound unpacking of what we had learned and, and that's where the learning all crystallized. But there was always a joy and, and humor. So I have tried and failed to bring humor to my classes. I think humor shows up and invites itself spontaneously. And so I'm not saying that I haven't ever said anything funny. But early in my career I thought, you know, I mean, and we can pick up any of our, or our books about doing a good lecture or whatever. And it'll say "include humor."

CR: Right?

LS: But prepared humor--I'm just not very good at that. And it does fall flat. So, you know, I admire my boss and the grad school, Dr. Larry Lyon. You can watch Larry Lyon give a presentation and it doesn't matter who that audience is, he will have them in stitches at some point. That's, that's how he relates. And it—I've watched him behind the scenes. It is well prepared, it is thoroughly practiced and he knows exactly when we're going to laugh and how long we should laugh for--and I can't do it. I've tried. So yes. That's where I'm at. In more recent years, I've said give up on that Laine, and look at joy instead. And so some of the ways that Diana did, I, I often do and I feel like I can bring joy to my classes. But humor, that's, that's a different thing.

CR: That's great. I think that's great advice and you try to focus on, I think it goes back to the authenticity thing. You focus on what is true to you as a, as a teacher. And not only will you find that those things, some of those things just didn't work. But because they weren't you, students pick up on that too. And so for them, it becomes a less authentic experience.

LS: Yes. Absolutely.

CR: Well, we are about out of time. Was there anything else that you wanted to add for us before we let you go?

LS: Well, I know I keep mentioning the ATL, but as you know, the ATL is the very special part of Baylor for me because I had the privilege of being on that first committee with several others who were proposed to Baylor, “we need such a place.” And as I broke into faculty development before we had the ATL, we were working on little pockets. Summer Faculty Institute was one of them, but there were others that we said “there needs to be an infrastructure, there needs to be a budget.” And so just being with you here today and this happens all the time, Christopher, as we have other activities together. But just seeing how the ATL flourishes. We're in our 11th year now. And what you and your colleagues do to, to provide this resource for Baylor faculty is, is just a wonderful, wonderful gift to Baylor. So I would think, you know, my, my last words are thank you for for bringing to life the vision that we had those years ago.

CR: Well, thank you for your support and your work with the ATL and thank you for talking with us today and sharing your insights. We really appreciate it.

LS: Yeah, My pleasure.

CR: Thanks again to Dr. Lane scales for joining us today. In our show notes, you'll find links to a couple of resources we mentioned in our conversation, including Ken Bain's *What the Best College Teachers Do*. And Anthony Grasha's “Work on Teaching Styles.” That's our show. Join us next time for Professors Talk Pedagogy.