



# Creating Memorable Learning with Collaborations

## Teaching Beyond the Podium Podcast

### 00:06 Alexandra Bitton-Bailey

Hello, my name is Alexandra baton Bailey and welcome to the teaching beyond the podium podcast series. This podcast is hosted by the Center for Teaching Excellence at the University of Florida. And our guests share their best tips, strategies, innovations, and stories about teaching. Reagan was a small town girl with a love of learning and insatiable energy, who always knew she wanted to teach one day, she made her mark in her industry, and soon decided she was ready for a new adventure.

### 00:37 Raegan Burden

My name is Professor Raegan Burden, I am the first lecture of cultural engagement and the Department of advertising in the CJC. And I started here fall of 2019.

### 00:49 Alexandra Bitton-Bailey

Raegan found that as an instructor, she did not intend to run her class in a traditional lecture model, a model in which students are often navigating their experience alone. Instead, she opted to make her course and authentic experience that would require students to work together to be successful, as they will have to do in their fields.

### 01:10 Raegan Burden

I think the first thing is for any educator in academia that it feels like a complete shift in focus in some ways, because it steps away from exams, it steps away from your typical paper delivery and methodology. Let's read let's lecture, let's test let's quiz, let's do a final exam, let's do some major papers. And that is very much an individual process for the student. Collaborative learning is very different, because it really starts with the base on understanding, you can't get to the finish line without each other, not entirely. And I love that because for me, again, I come from agency land, from marketing and branding, that is all about team collaboration, there is absolutely no way to deliver a pitch, a creative brief a strategy deck, a campaign, a TV commercial, a print ad, there is no way to get to the finish line without one another. And so for students who, obviously, all of my students that I currently have in my courses are brand new to the major of advertising. So my classes represent the very first kind of foray into that space. I think that starting off with collaborative learning is essential, because I kind of do have to shift

them outside of the high school or first couple of years of you know, knocking down these electives that leads towards that that bachelor's degree, they've been kind of in their own zone, they very much been in, okay, if I put the work in, I will get it back out. Yeah, there may be one group project, but it's going to be for a limited amount of time, it's not going to take up the entire semester of a couple weeks, and we're done. And so and even at that, in some cases, I kind of have decided who I want to work with to even approach it. And even for me, collaborative learning starts off with, you don't know who you're going to work with, because that's reality if you're going to be an advertising. So I think starting off that way, helps to immediately hit check them into Oh, we're now stepping into the real world. And I really think of collaborative learning, especially for students that hail from media holistically. It is very much a simulation of real world because they get internships for the summer, to help them in their pathway, you know, to get a full time job after graduation, they're going to be literally thrown into a team setting where you've got five or six people at any given time having a role and what you do. And so I do feel kind of a responsibility to put them in that.

### 03:43 Alexandra Bitton-Bailey

Raegan also believes that giving students choice and room to pick and work on the topics they're most interested in, she'll get greater buy in from them. And it will be motivating for her students.

### 03:54 Raegan Burden

I can utilize my advertising strategy class as a great example. And this will probably be the class that I've referenced continually. Because the methodology that I walked into is kind of a mirror between a cultural conversation with them, meaning how are you accustomed to producing something that needs to be graded, so I have to kind of start there with kind of addressing it head on myself, then I also have to shift into the psychology of that. That's always the hardest part because again, I put them in these groups that we call agencies, I kind of slowly start prepping them. Hey, guys, it's coming. You know, these first couple of assignments are on you individually. But after that, we're going to step over into this for the rest of the semester. And so by the time we get there, it becomes a thing. We're okay now they're an agency. They literally produce a logo, they give themselves a name. Every class they sit with their agency, and they move themselves into four or five corners, six quarters, however many groups I have that semester, no more than four for any group and I've placed them also to based upon what their interests are within advertising. So there is a, essentially a QA, privately through Canvas that I utilize to kind of very quickly isolate What are your top two areas of interest within the business so that at the bare minimum, I can spread some interests, and the skill sets that know they're going to need to get to the end, we're going to need a leader, we're gonna need somebody that loves numbers, we're gonna need somebody that's really creative. I try to blend it. So not based upon who they are. That's part of the reason I placed them so quickly, because I don't even know who they are yet. This also keeps me fair as an instructor in that process, because I'm not favoring the students. And I've done it so quickly, they haven't had time to reveal who they are yet and open up more over the course of the semester. But if I place you based upon skill sets, that you believe this is the area within advertising, I want to focus on that I can blend it a lot better.

## 05:57 Alexandra Bitton-Bailey

The work the students do with their teams or marketing agencies, is an actual industry product, giving them a chance to really practice skills they're going to need.

## 06:08 Raegan Burden

The next step, for me, at least in the strategy class, is to have them married themselves to a brand, every assignment that you do is going to be about addressing this one brand. Here are the guidelines of what you need to select this semester, it's about finding a brand that is facing some type of problem. Can you isolate what the problem is through secondary research? Can you find enough information to get an understanding of why that is a problem. And so now, every single part of this strategy document which is at the end of the semester, it's a strategy brief that strategy brief is the end of course project they have to literally produce an actual brief.

## 06:46 Alexandra Bitton-Bailey

She also embeds the low stakes fun activities that encourage teams to work cooperatively together, while removing the stressor of striving for a grade, such as picking an agency name.

## 06:58 Raegan Burden

Well, once they're placed on the first thing that I do is not so much about icebreakers or that point, I'm so far I've been very fortunate by the time I get them, they're, they're ready to go. Because now they're like, Oh, I see what we're going to produce something. And, and for them being an advertising students, they all want to produce something anyway. But the one thing that I do do in terms of them naming themselves, I have them do that in class. And so usually that's done during my hour block that hour bike that I have, and then I'm walking around and I don't say anything. I'm like, you know, the fly in the room on the wall. And for me, that is their literal first activity. But I started in class, because what does that do? It requires him to exchange information. It requires them to say, Okay, this is my name. But the third most important thing it requires them to do is to talk to one another in a way that is not about a grade. The first activity for me cannot be something that is great is completed or not completed, but not where they fight, oh my god, we're going to get an A or A, B or C or D. Because I think if I can take that intensity off that very first opportunity for them to come together, it doesn't feel like you're getting graded. What it looks like is okay, we've got to come up with something that may sound different, but that feels different. For the first time you're coming together, that feels different. So that's always going to be my first first activity in that class. Give me an agency name.

## 08:25 Alexandra Bitton-Bailey

Reagan starts the semester out having student teams evaluate other existing brands, the conversations, create a relaxed, fun culture, where students and instructor create a learning environment together.

## 08:38 Raegan Burden

So those first two or three weeks we're spending time having these very honest, at times funny snarky conversations about what is working and what's not working. We talked about everything from MTV to I mean, to target to I mean, what is the problem? What's working? Well, what isn't? I get them into the nucleus of why are you shopping? Why are you buying what you're buying? Like one of my favorite physical displays, I literally get the students up and do a simulation of Starbucks versus Dunkin Donuts versus McDonald's. And I literally get up and simulate with them. I'm the starb I'm always the Starbucks lady. Because that everybody knows that about me. There is a reason why you're going to Starbucks when you can go right down the street and get McDonald's or dunkin donuts. And if you are, why aren't you? That's how I get them to orient themselves to one another. By the time we get to the groups because we've had these funny, introspective dialogues, they've laughed at one another themselves sometimes set some really honest raw Is that okay to say that? Yes, honey, it's advertising, you know, bring you know, because there's always that there's always about two or three students that I have that are very good. They're like me, they can just say it. And and as I give them room to do that, my quieter students will slowly you know, and I'll see them I mean, every body language, half of advertising is nonverbal anyway, so I can see when you have something. So and that's first three weeks. I'm getting them oriented to me, but they don't understand I'm really orienting them to one another.

## 10:05 Alexandra Bitton-Bailey

The course becomes a collaboration between students and the instructor. Bit by bit, piece by piece. They're building a collaborative work. And Raegan functions as their consultant.

## 10:16 Raegan Burden

The pieces that really formulate the most critical thinking, evaluation, understanding, we do still have a textbook. So essentially, they're able, in real time, chapter by chapter to produce the pieces that this book is talking about, but in a way that I get to serve as their consultant.

## 10:34 Alexandra Bitton-Bailey

Using collaborative learning strategies does not mean that students do not need to build up their foundational field knowledge, through repetition and practice. Raegan bakes that right into the mix.

## 10:45 Raegan Burden

Don't get me wrong there, you know, simple quizzes that I put them through to make sure they're learning terms. Because remember, this is their first foray into the field. They don't know some of the terms kerning or this or that. They don't know all of those. So yes, we're still doing that. But it becomes application based, you read it, we I lecture about it, we do a quiz on it. And now you produce something about this brand as part of your strategy brief as we move along. And they move along and intensity.

## 11:11 Alexandra Bitton-Bailey

Using collaborative learning requires careful planning and backward design, thinking ahead to what are the end goals and how you can design a 16 week experience that can help your students to achieve those end goals.

## 11:24 Raegan Burden

I'll be honest with you, that is the hardest part of collaborative learning, because it is not right here in front of you week to week, it's looking down the road at that 16 week class, you know, an entire semester. Okay, why, what is the goal? It is highly strategic. It isn't a situation where you come in week to week figuring out what you're doing, so to speak, in terms of the real, tangible work product. No, no, no, no, you have to have that mapped out already. Now pieces can change the case study can change that you use. In my case, you can change what ad you're going to put up on the screen that day, some of those things can be more about what's happened in real time as well. So I can change some of the data, if you will, that goes into it. But in terms of knowing what I'm doing week to week to week to week, that is the biggest challenge because you can't move that around, or like you just said, they will feel lost in the process. So I really have to put on that type of firm scheduling, to even keep myself on track with them.

## 12:24 Alexandra Bitton-Bailey

Groups do occasionally encounter conflict or unable to reach an agreement. That's when Raegan puts on her consultant hat and guides groups through challenging conversations.

## 12:35 Raegan Burden

I did have a couple of situations where students like Well, I don't think it should be this way. Because in those cases, they're already prepped in advance, if you run into a situation where you all cannot reach a consensus, that's what I'm here for. I'm the classroom consultant, I said, bring it to me. And we'll set up a time whether that's office hours right after class, if no one, you know has an additional class to go to. And we'll talk it out. Because in that space, then I get to show them how to reach a productive decision. There are times where I'll do a storming, forming norming lecture on interpersonal communication. You know, and obviously, everybody has their

own horror stories about group work. So even sometimes doing that prior to placing them now everybody gets to hear what other people might have been through. So you don't think you're the only person that's nervous about this.

## 13:24 Alexandra Bitton-Bailey

Raegan's grading and evaluating of students really reflects what they will encounter in an ad agency, which forces students to collaborate positively is skill essential in most fields.

## 13:35 Raegan Burden

If one person gets to 70, you're all getting a 70. Now that is met with (gasp) and I said, Now hold a minute, What's your major? Advertising, let me help you understand something about advertising. When you lose a pitch, we've all lost the pitch, you lose a client, we have all lost the client. Now internally, we will sit here and hammer out whose fault was that? Or who had too many errors that or who was a problem internally. So for me the place where I infuse the grading of one another is the final project. Now the interesting part of this is that one person could look at that and say well that's only about the final project. Know the way my classes designed, they have to work together to get to that. So whatever shows up down there has been happening for some time. That is how adland evaluations happen. So individually, you decide what your final grade is going to be on that final project. Now the ones that come along are shared great, but that last one that is worth 30% of your grade. In and of yourself all you can get as a see if that does not sound warm and fuzzy to you get to collaborating in a positive productive fashion. That's that's how I tell them because that is real life and adland 70% of this you can do on your own. But to get to the finish on you're going to need the other 30% of this room.

## 14:58 Alexandra Bitton-Bailey

Students are able to get feedback to each other. This can help students to reflect on their individual contributions and discover how they can improve in the future.

## 15:07 Raegan Burden

I do let them know that the comments on the evaluations are anonymous, but I will make them available to you anonymously. So you won't know who in your group said what. Now, I have had circumstances where students wanted to know why they got such low marks. And I will do that privately, you know, in my office as a, you know, scheduled meeting. And I've had a couple of times where it was a very emotional, I didn't know they felt this way or blah, blah. So then that turns into an opportunity for me now, as an instructor and my husband, the business to come in and say, let me tell you something, they love what you did. They just don't like how you did it. Let's talk about that.

## 15:45 Alexandra Bitton-Bailey

So how do students feel about this class model? Well, they love it, not because it's easy, but because they really have to work and learn.

## 15:54 Raegan Burden

I literally just got an email yesterday from a student. And he said to me that this was actually his favorite class. He and his in his little words, and honestly, I've gotten this several times, either during the semester or directly after I talk more in this class, and I do anywhere. You let me talk most of my other classes, I just sit there.

## 16:13 Alexandra Bitton-Bailey

Raegan's advice for implementing this in any field? Well, she suggests looking at your own career journey. How did you achieve what you did? How did you publish articles or build product, recreate it so students can use it as a collaboration opportunity?

## 16:29 Raegan Burden

Think about the things that you've done yourself, whether you've been a lifelong academic, grants research funding, bla, bla, and it really and even five, look at lifelong academics. And you're now a tenured, you know, Professor, there are pieces of research that were not all you most of the journal articles that even that we read, Journal of advertising, Journal of marketing, Journal of so on, and so on. All of these journals, most of them are group efforts. And so I think that if they even approach a final paper from that perspective, and change how it's literally designed or required to be turned in, put some of those elements of producing peer reviewed journal articles into your class, everybody's gonna have to write a paper, we know we love a paper in academia, every class is gonna have to write a paper and mathematics, you will have to solve the grand equation and explain it or you know, everybody has something within their career, we all have that you could not get to the finish line by yourself, find that one and put it in there. It may not be the whole semester, but maybe it takes up to three weeks for them to do it. There's a way to make it simpler even if you don't want to use my total approach. There is something in your wheelhouse that you could not have done professionally by yourself. Take that one and put it in your class.

## 17:48 Alexandra Bitton-Bailey

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