

## Dr. Richard Pennington speech for Board of Regents meeting – April 2015

Good morning everybody. My name is Richard Pennington and I teach chemistry here at GGC.

When I joined the GGC faculty in 2007, our dean, Dr. Tom Mundie, told us, “Try something different, try something new and don’t be afraid of failing.”

So I decided to take him up on that, and, after seeing how one of my chemistry faculty peers led his classroom, I decided to try my particular variant of what would become known as “flipping the classroom.”

In my first teaching position I discovered that plain old lecturing was just not working for me; but, like many Ph.D.s with no actual training as a teacher, I didn’t know how to fix what I knew was a problem, and only when I came to GGC did I discover how to fix it. And, to me, that is one of the reasons why GGC is so different. We don’t do things the way they have always been done. We find new and better ways of doing things. And we are not afraid of failing when we try those new things.

So, what exactly is this flipped classroom concept that I just mentioned? Simply put, I give my students all the tools they need to prepare for class, as they should be doing anyway, and then ask them to do so, for each and every class. The tools I give them are things such as a daily lesson plan, preparatory videos and my GGC cell phone number so they can call or text should they have issues before class, and they text a lot.

And after I address any questions at the start of class, the students spend the rest of the class working together in groups up at the white boards. That way they are interacting with each other in their groups while doing their work. In this way the students stay engaged and focused, and our contact time is spent much more efficiently. In my classroom, the students become active participants, rather than passive observers in the class. And I have no plans to go back to traditional lecturing anytime soon.

Now I was never a particularly strong student; my high school teacher told my parents one year that I was simply not smart enough to pass her chemistry class. And so to remember that and see how far I have been able to come, from getting my bachelor’s degree, to getting my Ph.D. and then receiving the 2013 Board of Regents’ Outstanding Teaching Award, it’s an amazing thing – and that award would not have happened without the opportunities that you all have made available at GGC.

Provided they show a desire for success, GGC has a commitment to help every student who comes through their doors; I am able to share this opportunity with all of my students. I feel I am better for it, and I feel that my students are better for it.

True success comes from the knowledge that you are making a difference, and I feel I do this every day at GGC.

Thank you for enabling us to create this unique environment in which this is possible.