

Determining the Essential Characteristics for Effective College Teaching

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Abstract: Higher education institutions continually increase the demands on college instructors. Yet, all too often, many college instructors have had little to no preparation for teaching in higher education. What is needed is a comprehensive and clear list of characteristics expected of effective college teachers, both in-person and online, comprised by those who are focused on studying the subject matter deeply. To assess the characteristics deemed essential for college instructors to possess, a nationwide, modified Delphi technique was employed, eliciting opinions from an established panel of experts. At the conclusion of a three-round Delphi study, 46 of the 55 original items submitted by the panelists reached consensus of agreement. The 46 items were then categorized to establish six overarching themes associated with effective college teaching. The categorized themes and characteristics determined in the study of effective college teachers should be used as a comprehensive and clear list to provide college faculty with expectations of effective teaching. Additional research is needed to convert the items found in this study into an effective college teaching instrument. Such an instrument should be validated for use across academia as a starting point for the development, training, and support of future and current college teachers.

Keywords: Delphi Method, higher education instruction, teaching effectiveness.

Higher education institutions have increased the demands on college instructors. Faculty are expected to graduate college students in shorter time periods while increasing student retention by decreasing the D-F-W rates (Olson et al., 2022). Such expectations place a heavy burden on college teachers, especially given that the majority have received little to no training in teaching (Hoyert et al., 2019). As such, being an effective teacher is one of the most difficult roles university faculty members face (Smittle, 2003). In addition to the demands listed above, teaching effectively at the college level is difficult since it is a multi-layered, faceted, and dimensional concept (Farrell, 2015; Harris, 1998).

In a study of effective teaching in higher education in the UK, it was determined that faculty deemed effective were those who provided a safe and supportive place to learn, maintained a rigorous and high level of expectations for students, offered support to students through proper scaffolding techniques, and were clear in their expectations (Allan et al., 2009). It is also widely accepted that effective teachers provide student-centric pedagogy (Bain, 2004; Weimer, 2002; Wright, 2011; Opendakker & Van Damme, 2006) by engaging their students in the learning process.

In addition to teaching students in a classroom, effective college teachers advise students, hold office hours, plan for instruction, and provide tutoring services, all in the attempt to increase student

engagement and success (McKeachie & Kulik, 1975). Additionally, Wilson et al. (1973) identified five components related to being a good teacher, including research activity and recognition, participation in the academic community, intellectual breadth, relations with students, and concern for teaching. Ultimately, however, “[f]aculty at postsecondary institutions must recognize and embrace the importance of developing teaching skills that enhance learning for all types of students in tandem with continuing development of their content-area knowledge” (Smittle, 2003, p. 16). Komos (2013) explored three factors warranted for evaluation by adjunct faculty, including instructor competence, regard for the student, and instructional proficiency.

Effective college teachers are those who meet the needs of their students (Hoyert & O’Dell, 2019). They seek to understand, then challenge, and ultimately alter the way students “think, act or feel” (Bain, 2004, p. 7). As a result, they value learning and cause students to develop or expand their love of learning (Bain, 2004). As such, college teachers prepare meticulously for teaching their content – often months in advance of the first class – and they seek to make their classes active and engaged however possible (Svinicki & McKeachie, 2014). To engage their students at higher levels, effective college instructors change the pace of their lessons frequently depending on student success, or lack thereof, in specific portions of the lessons they teach (Nilson, 2010). Similarly, Calaguas (2013) identified teaching related behaviors, relational expertise, subject matter expertise, and personality and the four major themes of effective college teachers.

All too often, unfortunately, college instructors are ill prepared for teaching in higher education (Hoyert et al., 2019). They have not received training in how to include or accommodate a variety of learners and learning styles into their lessons, engage learners in their subject areas, teach at higher-order levels of cognition, or use a variety of advanced instructional strategies (Nilson, 2010). What is more, college teachers differ on what it means to be effective, especially regarding terms such as “caring, concern, empathy, valuing, and understanding,” all words used to describe effective college teachers (Olson et al., 2022, p. 19).

Perhaps the concept of effective teaching becomes even more difficult to grasp considering the multitude of delivery methods (i.e., in-person teaching, synchronous online teaching, and asynchronous online teaching) college instructors must use to teach their content. Regarding online instruction, Young (2006) found that effective online teachers included those who: 1) modified their teaching to fit students’ needs, 2) encouraged students to work hard, 3) expressed empathy for students, 4) used meaningful and relevant examples to accentuate learning, 5) focused on the purpose of the course, 6) facilitated the course appropriately, and 7) used good and frequent communication. Like in-person instruction, teaching online is challenging (Brinthaupt et al., 2011). As such, evaluating effective college teaching is a daunting task, as the list of necessary teaching-related skills expected of higher education faculty is often cumbersome and unclear, as the uncertainty of how to define effective teaching is a recurring conversation (Chism, 2004).

During the 1980’s and 1990’s, effective college teaching was relegated to students’ end-of-semester evaluations of their college professors (Barkley & Major, 2022). Little to no other form of evaluation was offered. Even today, effective teaching is largely dependent on student evaluation data (Barkley & Major, 2002; Wright, 2006). Unfortunately, college students often “don’t know what they don’t know” (Forsyth et al., p. 679). Therefore, evaluations of college faculty can be faulty, biased, and result in low levels of validity and utility for those who teach in higher education (Wright, 2006). What is needed, instead, is a comprehensive and clear list of characteristics expected of effective college teachers, both in-person and online, comprised by those who study the phenomenon deeply (i.e., college teaching faculty, directors of effective teaching centers, and those whose scholarship is situated on the topic of college teaching). Previous studies have developed lists based on the perspectives of college students (Calaguas, 2013), adjunct faculty (Komos, 2013), and colleagues (Wilson et al., 1973), but a panel of experts has yet to be established regarding this multidimensional concept (Farrell, 2015).

Identifying such characteristics can help inform college and university faculty and staff of the specific education, skills, training, and experiences needed for hiring and developing effective college teachers to instruct their courses regardless of mode (i.e., in-person and online).

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the study was to identify the essential characteristics of effective college teachers. Three objectives guided the study:

- 1) Determine the characteristics necessary for an effective in-person college teacher,
- 2) Determine the characteristics necessary for an effective online college teacher, and
- 3) Categorize the characteristics based on needs of effective college teachers.

Methods and Procedures

To assess the characteristics deemed essential for college instructors to possess, we employed a nationwide, modified Delphi technique, eliciting opinions from an established panel of experts (Dalkey, 1969). Effective teaching is often considered an elusive concept (Farrell, 2015); therefore, the Delphi approach was deemed useful for uncovering these characteristics. To establish the characteristics specific to effective college teachers, a panel of experts was developed. The criteria for selecting the panelists consisted of those who authored books on effective college teaching, faculty teaching courses on *Effective College Teaching* as part of a certificate or degree program in a college teaching program, online education specialists, and directors of college and university centers for teaching and learning excellence from around the U.S. In all, 48 experts populated our frame. It was assumed the established panel of experts had a robust and comprehensive knowledge and set of experiences on the topic, which enabled them to serve as appropriate panelists for our study (Benner, 1982). Specifically, the breakdown of our expert panel consisted of 14 authors of books on effective college teaching, 14 faculty members, 14 directors of university centers focused on effective teaching and learning, and six online education specialists. In addition, the expert panel represented 32 different states, which resonated with the national scope of the study.

To ensure a high level of reliability was achieved and sustained throughout the duration of the study, we aimed to have a minimum of 13 consistent respondents for each of the three rounds of data collection, which is in congruence with Dalkey's (1969) recommendation. We collected our data for all three rounds via an online questionnaire developed through Qualtrics. Forty-eight individual email invitations were sent to the expert panelists along with three follow-up emails for each of the three rounds (Dillman et al., 2014). Each round was evaluated for face and content validity by two faculty members who had extensive higher education teaching experience. One of these faculty members has won a variety of prestigious teaching awards at the regional and national levels. The other faculty member has a minor in college teaching, has developed and taught a College Teaching course at the university level, and has also won prestigious teaching awards at the regional and national levels. Both faculty members are tenured at the level of professor at their institutions and have been inducted as Fellows in their respective discipline's national society. In addition to these two faculty members, an associate professor who teaches research, evaluation, measurement, and statistics also provided insight into the face and content validity of the study's instruments. Combined, the team had over 25 years of college teaching and research experience. The study was approved through the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Round One included two open-ended questions: 1) *What are the characteristics of an effective in-person college teacher?* and 2) *What are the characteristics of an effective online college teacher?* In addition to the

two open-ended questions, panelists were asked to define what it means for a college teacher to be effective and provide professional characteristics (i.e., professional role, years of effective college teaching experience, and type of institution). The responses received in Round One are outlined below in Table 1. The most frequent primary role of the respondents was book authors ($f = 4$, 30.77%) with 36+ years of experience ($f = 4$, 30.77%) at a R1 institution ($f = 6$, 46.15%). Although this may draw question to the representation of those who responded, Wilson et al. (1973) found personal and professional characteristics (i.e., rank, discipline, age, and length of teaching experience) to be “unrelated to their descriptions of effective teachers”.

Table 1: Professional Characteristics of Effective College Teaching Experts ($n = 13$)

		<i>f</i>	%
Primary Role	Assistant Professor	1	7.69
	Associate Professor	1	7.69
	Professor	3	23.07
	Emeritus Professor	3	23.07
	Book Author	4	30.77
	Director of University Center for Teaching Excellence	1	7.69
Experience (Years)	1 to 5	1	7.69
	6 to 10	1	7.69
	11 to 15	2	15.38
	16 to 20	1	7.69
	21 to 25	1	7.69
	26 to 30	1	7.69
	31 to 35	1	7.69
	36 +	4	30.77
	Prefer to not respond	1	7.69
Type of Institution ^a	Public (4-year)	4	30.77
	Private (4-year)	1	7.69
	Land-Grant	1	7.69
	R1	6	46.15
	Other	1	7.69

Note. ^a = Participants could select all institution types that applied.

The research team reviewed the responses from Round One and removed duplications to develop a complete list of effective college teaching characteristics, which were submitted to the panelists in Round Two of the study. In Round Two, panelists were asked to rate each item as to how important the characteristic was to effective teaching on a four-point scale of agreement: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Agree; 4 = Strongly Agree. The research team established a consensus protocol, a priori, allowing for items achieving a mean rating of 3.0 or higher with 100% agreement from the panelists to be retained for the final list of effective teaching characteristics. Items failing to reach the established criteria for consensus were redistributed in Round Three. During this phase of data collection, panelists were asked to modify the statements to determine their *agreement* or *disagreement* with them. Specifically, panelists received the statements that had yet to reach consensus

and were asked, “If you could change the semantics of the item, would you then be able to agree with it? If so, please change it accordingly.” Panelists responded with “Yes” or “No” to each item. For those they marked, “Yes,” they then offered an alternative item. For Round Three, an a priori rate of agreement was set at 85%, meaning that 85% of the experts had to agree with the item before it would be retained as part of the final list of characteristics. Any items failing below 85% agreement were removed from the final list. This study was completed in three rounds, which is sufficient for a modified Delphi study to achieve consensus of agreement (Custer et al., 1999).

The final objective of this study was to categorize the effective college teaching items. To accomplish this goal, we implemented the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to identify emerging themes to support the final list of effective college teaching characteristics and group them with similar items. We collectively analyzed and grouped items to ensure inter-rater reliability (Privitera, 2017).

Findings

Based on the expert responses, Round One of the study resulted in 65 statements on essential characteristics for in-person college teachers and 15 statements on essential characteristics for online teachers. After reviewing the responses from Round One and removing duplications, 42 items related to effective in-person college teaching and 13 items related to online instruction were submitted back to the panelists in Round Two of the study. Those items are listed below in Table 2.

Table 2: Round One: Effective Characteristics of In-Person and Online College Teachers (*n* = 13)

Modality	Identified Characteristic
In-Person	In-Person
	Demonstrates enthusiasm
	Integrates learning techniques validated by cognitive science
	Knows how to attract and maintain student attention
	Has the ability to engage students
	Has effective verbal communication skills
	Maintains rigorous academic standards
	Evaluates student learning outcomes
	Clearly communicates expectations
	Implements scaffolding techniques for instruction
	Provides prompt feedback
	Encourages active learning
	Has pedagogical (i.e., teaching) expertise
	Is skilled at designing effective learning experiences
	Sequences outcomes for a clear learning process
	Is caring
	Provides opportunities to apply course content
	Uses active learning
	Demonstrates an interest in student engagement
	Has content expertise
	Is a good listener
	Assesses students based on course content

	Effectively plans instruction
	Provides an inclusive learning environment
	Respects diverse talents
	Recognizes differences among students
	Motivates students to learn
	Motivates students to excel
	Integrates self-regulated learning activities and assignments into the course
	Implements questioning strategies
	Understanding students who come from different backgrounds than the teacher
	Allows students to learn in multiple modes
	Is welcoming
	Is organized
	Is an interesting speaker
	Uses individual activities
	Appropriately uses technology
	Encourages a cooperative learning environment
	Builds professional relationships with students
	Implements didactic/direct instruction
	Instructs through small-group activities
	Emphasizes time on task
	Is understanding of diverse learning styles
Online	
	Effectively uses technology
	Integrates appropriate technology
	Understands online pedagogy
	Is accessible
	Provides timely feedback
	Engages students online using appropriate technology
	Provides clear directions
	Is flexible
	Maintains an online presence
	Establishes an online community
	Demonstrates excellent public speaking skills in videos/online instruction
	Develops professional online relationships with students
	Is willing to develop online systems

Thirty-two (76%) of the 42 identified characteristics for effective instruction reached consensus in Round Two. To reach consensus, the item had to achieve a mean score of at least 3.0 (on a four-point scale of agreement) with 100% consensus of agreement among the panelists. The top eight characteristics with the highest rated mean scores that reached 100% consensus of agreement included: demonstrates enthusiasm, integrates learning techniques validated by cognitive science, knows how to attract and maintain student attention, has the ability to engage students, has effective verbal communication skills, maintains rigorous academic standards, evaluates students learning outcomes, and clearly communicates expectations, all with a mean score of 3.78 and a standard deviation of .44 (see Table 2). The bottom two characteristics with the lowest rated mean scores included emphasizes time on task ($M = 2.78$, $SD = .83$) and is understanding of diverse learning styles

($M = 2.78$, $SD = .97$). These two characteristics received a 69.2 and 76.9% agreement, respectively (see Table 3). The remaining 10 items that failed to reach the threshold ranged from a low of 2.78 to a high of 3.56 with consensus ranging from 76.9% to 92.3%. For a full review of the items and how they were rated, please see Table 3.

Table 3: Round Two: Level of Agreement with Effective Characteristics of In-Person College Teachers ($n = 13$)

Identified Characteristic	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	% Agreement ^a
Demonstrates enthusiasm	3.78	.44	100.0
Integrates learning techniques validated by cognitive science	3.78	.44	100.0
Knows how to attract and maintain student attention	3.78	.44	100.0
Has the ability to engage students	3.78	.44	100.0
Has effective verbal communication skills	3.78	.44	100.0
Maintains rigorous academic standards	3.78	.44	100.0
Evaluates student learning outcomes	3.78	.44	100.0
Clearly communicates expectations	3.78	.44	100.0
Implements scaffolding techniques for instruction	3.67	.50	100.0
Provides prompt feedback	3.67	.50	100.0
Encourages active learning	3.67	.50	100.0
Has pedagogical (i.e., teaching) expertise	3.67	.50	100.0
Is skilled at designing effective learning experiences	3.67	.50	100.0
Sequences outcomes for a clear learning process	3.67	.53	100.0
Is caring	3.67	.50	100.0
Provides opportunities to apply course content	3.67	.50	100.0
Uses active learning	3.67	.50	100.0
Demonstrates an interest in student engagement	3.56	.53	100.0
Has content expertise	3.56	.53	100.0
Is a good listener	3.56	.73	92.3
Assesses students based on course content	3.56	.50	100.0
Effectively plans instruction	3.56	.53	100.0
Provides an inclusive learning environment	3.56	.53	100.0
Respects diverse talents	3.56	.53	100.0
Recognizes differences among students	3.56	.53	100.0
Motivates students to learn	3.56	.53	100.0
Motivates students to excel	3.56	.53	100.0
Integrates self-regulated learning activities and assignments into the course	3.56	.73	92.3
Implements questioning strategies	3.44	.53	92.3
Understanding students who come from different backgrounds than the teacher	3.44	.53	100.0
Allows students to learn in multiple modes	3.44	.53	100.0
Is welcoming	3.44	.53	100.0
Is organized	3.44	.53	100.0
Is an interesting speaker	3.33	.50	100.0
Uses individual activities	3.22	.67	92.3

Appropriately uses technology	3.11	.33	100.0
Encourages a cooperative learning environment	3.11	.60	92.3
Builds professional relationships with students	3.00	.71	84.6
Implements didactic/direct instruction	3.00	.87	76.9
Instructs through small-group activities	3.00	.71	84.6
Emphasizes time on task	2.78	.83	69.2
Is understanding of diverse learning styles	2.78	.97	76.9

Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree; ^a = items marked as either a 3 or a 4.

Similarly, 10 (77%) of 13 characteristics specific to effective online teaching reached consensus in Round Two (see Table 4). The top four skills included: effectively uses technology ($M = 3.89$, $SD = .33$), integrates appropriate technology ($M = 3.78$, $SD = .44$), understands online pedagogy ($M = 3.67$, $SD = .50$), and is accessible ($M = 3.67$, $SD = .50$). Develops professional online relationships with students ($M = 3.00$, $SD = .71$) and is willing to develop online systems ($M = 2.78$, $SD = .67$) were the lowest rated items (see Table 4). The three items not reaching the threshold had mean scores ranging from a low of 2.78 to a high of 3.53 with consensus ranging from 76.9% to 92.3%.

Table 4: Round Two: Level of Agreement with Effective Characteristics of Online College Teachers ($n = 13$)

Identified Characteristic	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	% Agreement ^a
Effectively uses technology	3.89	.33	100.0
Integrates appropriate technology	3.78	.44	100.0
Understands online pedagogy	3.67	.50	100.0
Is accessible	3.67	.50	100.0
Provides timely feedback	3.56	.53	100.0
Engages students online using appropriate technology	3.56	.53	100.0
Provides clear directions	3.56	.53	100.0
Is flexible	3.33	.50	100.0
Maintains an online presence	3.33	.50	100.0
Establishes an online community	3.33	.71	92.3
Demonstrates excellent public speaking skills in videos/online instruction	3.22	.44	100.0
Develops professional online relationships with students	3.00	.71	84.6
Is willing to develop online systems	2.78	.67	76.9

Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree; ^a = items marked as either a 3 or a 4.

The 13 (i.e., 10 in-person and 3 online) items not reaching consensus in Round Two were submitted to panelists in Round Three, asking experts to either agree or disagree with the inclusion of the item for describing an effective college teacher. To determine which characteristics were retained in Round Three, the research team established an 85% agreement level as our threshold prior to

conducting the study. Four of the 13 items sent out in Round Three were retained as part of the essential components for effective college teaching who teach in-person classes (see Table 5). Those four were: is a good listener, implements questioning strategies, uses individual activities, and integrates self-regulated learning activities and assignments into the course.

Table 5: Round Three: Level of Agreement with Effective Characteristics of College Teachers who Instruct their Students In-Person ($n = 6$)

Identified Characteristic	% Agreement ^a
Is a good listener	100.0
Implements questioning strategies	100.0
Uses individual activities	100.0
Integrates self-regulated learning activities and assignments into the course	100.0
Encourages a cooperative learning environment	83.3
Emphasizes time on task	83.3
Instructs through small-group activities	83.3
Builds professional relationships with students	66.7
Implements didactic/direct instruction	66.7
Is understanding of diverse learning styles	50.0

Note. ^a = items marked as agree.

As for effective online teachers, only three items failed to reach the threshold in Round Two and were thus submitted back to the panel for consideration in Round Three. Those three included: establishes an online community, develops professional online relationships with students, and is willing to develop online systems (see Table 6). Ultimately, however, none of the three reached the 85% agreement minimum and were therefore dropped from further consideration in the study.

Table 6: Round Three: Level of Agreement with Effective Characteristics of College Teachers who Instruct their Students Online ($n = 6$)

Identified Characteristic	% Agreement ^a
Establishes an online community	83.3
Develops professional online relationships with students	66.7
Is willing to develop online systems	33.3

Note. ^a = items marked as agree.

The final objective aimed to categorize the effective college teaching items reaching consensus. Six categories were established using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to support the 46 items including, teaching pedagogy, student-centered instruction, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), personal dispositions, technology integration, and online engagement. The research team collectively analyzed and grouped items to ensure inter-rater reliability (Privitera, 2017), constantly comparing the items and groupings back to participants voice from the initial items and statements provided in Round 1 of the study. Thirty-eight of the 46 items are relevant to effective college teaching regardless of delivery method (i.e., in-person or online), while the remaining eight items are specific to online instruction and can be found in Table 3 under online engagement and

technology integration. Teaching pedagogy had the most identified characteristics with 13, followed by student centered instruction ($n = 12$), online engagement ($n = 7$), personal dispositions ($n = 6$), DEI ($n = 5$), and technology integration with 3. Table 7 outlines each of the six categories and their corresponding items.

Table 7: Categorized Characteristics of Effective College Teachers

Category	Identified Characteristic
Teaching Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrates learning techniques validated by cognitive science Knows how to attract and maintain student attention Has the ability to engage students Has effective verbal communication skills Clearly communicates expectations Implements scaffolding techniques for instruction Has pedagogical (i.e., teaching) expertise Is skilled at designing effective learning experiences Sequences outcomes for a clear learning process Uses individual activities Implements questioning strategies Effectively plans instruction Appropriately uses technology
Student-Centered Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motivates students to learn Motivates students to excel Uses active learning Demonstrates an interest in student engagement Encourages active learning Maintains rigorous academic standards Evaluates student learning outcomes Provides prompt feedback Provides opportunities to apply course content Has content expertise Assesses students based on course content Integrates self-regulated learning activities and assignments into the course
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding students who come from different backgrounds than the teacher Allows students to learn in multiple modes Provides an inclusive learning environment Respects diverse talents Recognizes differences among students
Personal Dispositions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is welcoming Is organized Is an interesting speaker

	Is a good listener Is caring Demonstrates enthusiasm
Technology Integration	Effectively uses technology Integrates appropriate technology Engages students online using appropriate technology ^a
Online Engagement ^a	Demonstrates excellent public speaking skills in videos/online instruction Understands online pedagogy Is accessible Provides timely feedback Provides clear directions Is flexible Maintains an online presence

Note. ^a = Items specific to effective online college teaching.

Conclusions, Recommendations, and Discussion

Using a nationwide panel of experts, this study aimed to establish a list of essential characteristics needed to be deemed an effective college teacher for both in-person and online instruction. At the conclusion of a three-round, modified Delphi study, 46 (84%) of the 55 original items originally submitted by the panelists reached consensus. The 46 items were then categorized with like items to establish six overarching categories (i.e., teaching pedagogy, student-centered instruction, diversity, equity, and inclusion, personal dispositions, technology integration, and online engagement) associated with effective college teaching, as teaching at the college level is a multi-layered, faceted, and dimensional concept (Farrell, 2015; Harris, 1998), which is highlighted throughout these categories. Teaching pedagogy and student-centered instruction resulted in the largest two categories with 13 items and 12 items respectively, aligning with previous research emphasizing the need for effective teachers to provide student-centric pedagogy (Bain, 2004; Weimer, 2002; Wright, 2011; Opdenakker & Van Damme, 2006). These two categories further align with the need for effective college teachers to engage their students in higher-order cognitive levels of thinking, which often results from adapting the pace of their lessons frequently to allow for student success (Nilson, 2010).

The category of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) aligns with essential need of effective college teachers meeting the needs of their students (Hoyert & O'Dell, 2019), allowing students to value learning and grow (Bain, 2004). All too often, the need for teachers to prepare in advance of their classes to effectively engage students goes unnoticed (Svinicki & McKeachie, 2014). Therefore, recognizing the personal dispositions associated with effective teaching (i.e., being welcoming, organized, an interesting speaker, a good listener, caring, and enthusiastic) within the complete list of characteristics is crucial to help effective teachers feel valued for their efforts.

Although being an effective teacher is one of the most difficult roles university faculty members face (Smittle, 2003), the role becomes even more daunting considering the multitude of delivery methods (i.e., in-person teaching, synchronous online teaching, and asynchronous online teaching) college instructors use to teach their content. Therefore, an essential component of effective college teaching must consider the delivery method of instruction. Thus, when an instructor is delivering

content online, online engagement must be considered. The six categories, including online engagement, provides a holistic approach to planning for, delivering, and evaluating effective college teaching. Young (2006) identified seven items (i.e., modified their teaching to fit students' needs, encouraged students to work hard, expressed empathy for students, used meaningful and relevant examples to accentuate learning, focused on the purpose of the course, facilitated the course appropriately, and used good and frequent communication) specific to effective online instruction, which align with the complete 46 item list developed in this study. Therefore, the categorized characteristics of effective college teachers (see Table 7) should be used as a comprehensive and clear list to provide college faculty with expectations of effective teaching, unlike the often faulty, biased, and low utility of previous teaching instruments (Wright, 2006).

The items deemed essential within this study for in-person and online college teachers have implications for all stakeholders engaged in effective college teaching. Unfortunately, many college instructors have had little to no preparation for teaching in higher education (Hoyert et al., 2019), although they are interested in growing as effective teachers (Komos, 2013). Therefore, it is recommended that these items be used by effective teaching centers to further cultivate professional development programs for current college teachers to enhance their effectiveness in the classroom and online. The use of such centers is essential as “assessing and evaluating teaching effectively requires knowledge of and sensitivity to the individuals and groups involved, the local context, and the academic and administrative culture of the institution” (Angelo, 1996, p. 62). It is also recommended that these items be used to develop future college teachers in graduate coursework. Specifically, these items should be taught to students in College Teaching courses as they prepare for the professoriate and careers in academia. Further, administrators and support staff of college teachers should consider using these items to evaluate the effectiveness of college teachers based on these essential components. Additional research is essential in converting these itemized characteristics into an effective college teaching instrument that is validated for use across academia as a starting point for the development, training, and support of future and current college teachers. Making these essential adjustments within college teaching evaluations can allow the assessment of teaching to be less reliant on student evaluation data (Barkley & Major, 2002; Wright, 2006) and based more on items vetted from a thorough research study with recognized experts. Evaluating college teachers on their teaching effectiveness and not their course evaluations helps to remove much of the bias associated with college students who are not overly astute and “don’t know what they don’t know” (Forsyth et al., p. 679).

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