

## Teaching Current Directions in Psychological Science

C. Nathan DeWall, David G. Myers, and Beth Morling

*Aimed at integrating cutting-edge psychological science into the classroom, Teaching Current Directions in Psychological Science offers advice and how-to guidance about teaching a particular area of research or topic in psychological science that has been the focus of an article in the APS journal [Current Directions in Psychological Science](#). Current Directions is a peer-reviewed bimonthly journal featuring reviews by leading experts covering all of scientific psychology and its applications and allowing readers to stay apprised of important developments across subfields beyond their areas of expertise. Its articles are written to be accessible to nonexperts, making them ideally suited for use in the classroom.*

### Reflecting on 5 Years of Teaching Current Directions

by C. Nathan DeWall and David G. Myers

*Teaching Current Directions* brings cutting-edge psychological science into the classroom. In January 2018, we celebrated 5 years of using the column to share our passion for teaching psychological science. Its mission endures, but the contents and contributors have evolved. Here we share the column's history, our reflections on its first 5 years, and our goals for its future.

*Teaching Current Directions* can be traced to a November 20, 2002, email from APS Executive Director Emeritus Alan Kraut to David Myers. *Current Directions in Psychological Science* was flourishing, and Kraut wondered whether Myers might help him with a pet project. "What we haven't done is make the more direct connection between the journal and teaching," Kraut said. "I always thought that what was missing was a section in each issue on how certain articles in that issue might be used in the classroom." A few emails fluttered between Kraut and Myers in the ensuing year. Nothing solidified and the case went cold.

In 2012, two unrelated events led to the birth of *Teaching Current Directions*. First, Myers recruited Nathan DeWall as successor coauthor on his *Introduction to Psychology* textbook series. Second, Kraut cleaned out his email inbox, leading him again to invite Myers to write a teaching column that featured *Current Directions* articles. Now working as a duo, Myers and DeWall enthusiastically agreed to select, summarize, and showcase *Current Directions* articles in the *APS Observer*, describing how instructors could bring the science into the classroom through engaging activities. Apart from the convention issue, *Teaching Current Directions* now appears in each issue of the magazine.

We spent the first few months trying to establish the column's mission, vision, and values, which include writing essays that highlight new psychological science insights for all *Observer* readers. With support from the *Current Directions* authors whose work we feature — and whom we invite to fact check and comment on our essays — those early columns covered topics such as desire, happiness, morality, and residential mobility. As we hit our stride, we began to receive feedback from other instructors who had read the column. To our surprise, more and more people were reading the column and using the activities in their classrooms. Even people with reduced teaching loads, who might not have been getting the opportunity to use the activities we described, told us they read the column every time they received the *Observer*. We had hit a nerve.

The column wasn't free of weaknesses. We struggled to cover topics outside of social psychology, our shared area of expertise. To fill this gap, we recruited two talented cognitive psychologists, APS Fellows Cindi May (College of Charleston) and Gil Einstein (Furman University), who began contributing several coauthored columns each year beginning in 2016. Their expertise and creativity helped add breadth and depth to the topics covered, which increased the column's impact.

Psychological science embraces and celebrates all forms of diversity. To ensure that the column did its due diligence in addressing issues of cultural diversity, we called upon the accomplished cultural psychologist Beth Morling as a contributing columnist in 2018. Morling's research methods, textbook authorship, and multifaceted experimental and teaching experience enable her to add a unique cultural perspective to the column.

The future of *Teaching Current Directions* is bright. Mariko Hewer and Kimberly Armstrong at APS continue to provide excellent editorial and technical support. This includes establishing an [electronic database](#) of all *Teaching Current Directions* columns. We hope to engage readers further by creating an interactive online feature in which instructors can share their experiences using the activities included in each column. Although both of us plan to continue contributing columns, we also hope to approach other talented teacher-writers who can aid our mission of bringing cutting-edge psychological science into the classroom.

The first 5 years of *Teaching Current Directions* have taught us that people are hungry to learn about psychological science and how to share its insights with others. Whether in a classroom, a conference presentation, or an informal hallway chat, people are eager to teach others how to better understand themselves, their fellows, and their global community. We look forward to touching base with you again in 5 years.

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