The Samberg Institute for Teaching Excellence is here to assist you in maximizing your teaching skills and having a successful teaching experience at Columbia Business School. Preparing to Teach will help you get off to the best possible start. In addition, the Samberg Institute is available to work with you as the academic year progresses. Please take advantage of the resources we provide. All the best with your teaching at the Business School.

Observing Courses

- Observing current course sessions is a good way to prepare for teaching at the Business School.
  - If you are a junior fulltime faculty member, this will be arranged through the mentoring program.
  - If you are an adjunct or visitor, please contact the Samberg Institute to arrange to observe one or more classes. The Institute can also arrange for you to work with a faculty member as you prepare your course.

- Observing all sessions of one section of a course will expose you to the way the course is organized and its content, as well as one way of delivering it.

- You may also find it useful to observe other sections and other courses/professors in order to gain exposure to different techniques and approaches to similar classroom situations.

- To prepare for the class you are observing, you should become familiar with all assigned materials. The professor or the administrator for the course can enroll you in Angel so you will have access to the materials and be able to see how the professor has designed the course online.

- During the session, take note of the content and teaching style:
  - How does the session fit into the overall course
  - What are the objectives for the session
  - How is the lesson organized
  - What teaching techniques are used to achieve the objectives
  - How are various classroom situations handled
  - How does the professor conduct the class discussion
• Preferably you should meet with the professor after the session to discuss your observations. If you are being mentored, you should meet with your mentor no less than once a week. This discussion will permit you to gain insight into what motivated the professor’s choices, how the same material might have been handled differently, and what may have worked or not worked for him/her in the past.

• Remember, your unique teaching style will evolve over time. But you need not reinvent the wheel: a variety of good teaching techniques are in practice at the School. As you are exposed to them, you will assemble a combination that works for you.

• **Preparing to Teach as a Guest Professor**
  o If you are being mentored, you will guest teach 2 or 3 sessions of the course (1 or 2 sessions of a half course).
  o Rehearse these sessions with a teaching skills coach.
  o You will receive feedback on these sessions from students, your mentor, and/or a teaching skills coach. Schedule enough time between sessions to provide ample opportunity to incorporate this feedback.

**Preparing Your Course**

• Make sure your overall course structure is easy for students to understand and clear in your syllabus and readings.

• When preparing each session of the course, make sure it fits into the overall course structure. How does it pertain to the session immediately before and after it as well as to the overall objectives of the course? Plan to make this clear to your students in your course documents and as you start each session.

• For each class session identify the main points (usually no more than 3-5) that you need the students to remember.

• These points become more meaningful to students if they understand the relevance to their academic or professional careers. Relate the course content to events currently in the press or being studied in other courses. Also, if possible, relate it to your own research or business experience, or to experiences of students in the class.

• If possible, get to know the students you will be teaching.
  o If you are teaching a core course, meet with the academic rep for your cluster. The rep can be a valuable ally and provide insight into the expectations and characteristics of his/her cluster. S/he may also help with gathering feedback and disseminating information.
  o If you are teaching a second term core course, or a course in the second half of the first term, sit in on some of your cluster’s first term courses to get a sense of the cluster’s dynamics.
  o Use the Facebook feature in Angel or the student directory to learn your students’ names and backgrounds.
  o As you’re creating your course outline, you may want to note which students have experience relevant to specific sessions of the course so that you may refer to them during the class.
  o Be aware of the diverse backgrounds of the students in your class, not just demographically but also academically. Particularly in core courses, the students may have a wide range of familiarity with the subject. Students have the opportunity to exempt from core courses, but some choose not to do this or fail the exemption exam.

• Prepare the teaching process as well as the content of each session. What delivery methods will be most effective in enabling students to understand the main points of the session (lecture, case discussion, activity, etc.)?
Preparing to Teach

- **Case discussions**: Preparing the case will take longer than you think. Be thoroughly familiar with the case including every factual detail. Clarify for yourself the objectives for teaching this case. The discussion can take many unforeseen paths, but make sure you know where you want to end up - that is, the main points of the session. It helps to write out beforehand the “board” that the discussion will produce. Based on past experience, your mentor can help you with this.
  - Think about how you will handle questions that are off the topic, or to which you may not know the answer. Your mentor, teaching skills coach or colleagues in the faculty may have helpful suggestions, tips and tricks for handling these situations.

- **Quantitative Examples**: Before class, work through quantitative examples you plan to use, making note of the solution in detail. Although you are completely familiar with the material, under classroom pressures you may make inadvertent errors, and this will help you correct yourself.
  - Use consistent notation. Although many students will be able to follow changes, students who are having difficulties following the material will get totally lost.
  - If you use PowerPoint, plan to use either the board or the annotator to work through some of the numeric examples in detail during class. What is immediately clear to you and the more advanced students in the class may require more effort for others.

- Decide how much time you plan to spend on each portion of the session. This should be somewhat flexible in case unexpected, interesting insights arise during class. Have some additional material prepared in case the class moves faster than anticipated. Be sure to allow time at the beginning of class to position this session in relation to the last one and at the end of class to wrap up, reviewing for students the most important take-aways.

- Be familiar with the classroom in which you will be teaching. Walk around. Check out the perspective from the students’ seats as well as from the front of the room. Try speaking out loud.

- Plan how you will use handouts and classroom media to communicate your main points (black/white board, overhead projections, video projections, PowerPoint, etc.)
  - Each classroom is equipped with a desktop computer and laptop connection, DVD/VCR player, and projector as well as a white/black board. Be sure you are comfortable with the classroom technology. Try it out either in your classroom or a similar one. The Multimedia group is available to help with this. You may need a refresher after your practice sessions in your mentor’s class.

- Rehearse your class. A teaching skills coach is available to work with you one on one and to rehearse your first class. You may also want to video tape yourself. This can be arranged through the Samberg Institute.

## In the Classroom

- Schedule time on class days, before you teach, to prepare and go over your class plan and time after class to jot down notes on what worked, what could be improved in the future and additional thoughts you might have about the session.

- Start the class on time, and let your students know this is your policy.

- **DO NOT** run over time at the end of class. Students stop listening when this happens. This will also make them late for their next class.
• **First Class:** Your first class sets the tone for the remainder of the semester. The impression you make at that time is hard to change.
  o Be sure to introduce yourself to the class and give them some information about yourself.
  o Show that you care about the students and the relevance of the course material to their futures. You may do this by calling on them by name, giving examples of how the course fits with their various career and academic paths, using specific students’ experiences as examples, etc.
  o Make your classroom norms clear in your syllabus and orally in your first class, e.g. class attendance, the use of laptops in class, lateness, eating in class, leaving during the class, etc. Then stick to them.

• **Questions:**
  o Be prepared for the possibility that a student might ask a question for which you cannot think of an immediate answer. DO NOT lose your cool. It happens to everyone.
  o One technique is to ask the class if anyone has an answer. Someone may have the “right” answer, or may have a response which offers a leaping off point for a useful discussion. It also gives you time to think. If a good answer comes from someone in the class, say so. If the class looks to you at the end, and you still are unsure of your answer, tell them it’s a good question and you want to think about it or you want to find out more about it. Ask the person to email you after class to remind you. When s/he emails you, follow up as you said.
  o Plan how to handle questions beyond the scope of the course or the discussion. Ask the person to email you, or the whole class, to have an offline discussion. Or you may want to accumulate questions and periodically circulate your answers to the class. Communicate to the class what your plan is.

• **Discussion:**
  o Avoid letting a small group dominate the class discussions. Try to draw out as many students as possible.
  o Some faculty cold call and some don’t. If you have trouble keeping a discussion going, ask other faculty how they do it. There are many clever tricks of the trade that might fit your own situation. For example, you may want to contact students whom you’d like to participate in class by email ahead of time, as a “warm call.”
  o To encourage preparation for case discussions, try asking students to answer a few questions about the case prior to class via a discussion board on Angel. The questions can require a brief one or two sentence response, and these responses may be shared with the class as a whole or visible only to you. The pre-class work can count towards a student’s participation grade.

• **PowerPoint**
  o Don’t read from your slides. The students can do that on their own. Use the slides to enhance and support the objectives of the class. Speak facing the students, not facing the slides.
  o If you do use PowerPoint, students appreciate having copies of the slides to take notes on during class. You may want to leave some information blank in order to elicit student input during class. If so, it would be helpful to the students if you posted the complete slides on Angel after class.

• **Group Assignments:**
  o Students are assigned to 5 to 6 person learning teams when they enter Columbia Business School and remain in these teams throughout their first two semesters. Professors teaching core courses are asked to make use of these pre-formed teams when assigning group work. If this raises issues, Vice Dean Ziv will work with the core course coordinator to find an alternative.
  o In a group assignment, make clear to the students what each group member’s responsibilities are - how familiar they must be with the process and final deliverable. Please refer to the Group Work document on your memory key for more information.
• **Feedback:**
  - Students appreciate timely, constructive feedback. This is particularly important if their work needs improvement. Try to return work and give feedback within a week. Also appreciated are guidelines for correct case solutions.
  - Work closely with your TA.
  - If your course has review sessions, find out how many students are attending and the issues raised. This will give you insight into how the course is going and what needs additional work. You may want to run the review session yourself before the midterm or final, or at other key points during the semester.

• **Class visits**
  - Your mentor and a teaching skills coach will be sitting in on several of your classes. Take time after each class to discuss their perspective and get their feedback. You may also want to ask certain questions about what is working and what is not. This outside perspective will be very valuable.
  - Members of the Samberg Institute may also visit your class in order to observe your teaching. These observations may be used to help tailor teaching support, to put student feedback in context, as well as to gather information on new and effective methods you may be using in your classroom. These visits will be scheduled with you ahead of time. This is an outstanding opportunity to receive feedback and an outside perspective on how the course is going, as well as to strategize how to improve the course and the support you receive.
  - Vice Dean Ziv also sits in on many Business School classes, including those being taught by new faculty members. These visits allow him to gather best practices and to indicate to students the significance of teaching to the administration. He will contact you ahead of time to schedule a visit.

• **Assessment**
  - You may want to pass out index cards as early as the third class and ask the students about the pace of the course and other teaching issues.
  - In a core course, you may also ask the academic rep to do an informal survey. Tell the class you’re doing that and then tell them what you found out and what you will do about it. If there’s something you can’t fix – like half say the pace is too fast and half say too slow – tell them that too. Don’t turn it into a discussion of your teaching style: just tell them.
  - In an elective, you can ask students to email you or talk to you after class if they have any comments on pace and teaching, or ask for a volunteer to serve as academic rep as in a core course.
  - For all new faculty members, the Samberg Institute will do a qualitative student evaluation just before the middle of the semester.
    - If you wish, we will discuss the feedback with you and help make sense of it.
    - Again, tell the class all the main points that came up and what you will do about them.

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**The Samberg Institute**

The Samberg Institute for Teaching Excellence, a groundbreaking initiative to enhance teaching and learning at the School, came into existence in the fall of 2002. The Institute was made possible by a generous endowment contributed by Arthur J. Samberg ’67, the Chairman of Pequot Capital Management Inc. and a member of the Columbia Business School Board of Overseers.

In general, the Institute serves as a resource on teaching and classroom management for the faculty, including full time, visiting and adjunct faculty.

The staff includes: Professor Amir Ziv, Faculty Director; Harriett Wagman, Administrative Director; Kim Kefgen, Associate Director; Paul Kaplan, Assistant Director; Dace Udris, Coordinator; Harriet Abramson, Coordinator (part-time).