

PFF Program Alumni Spotlight



"I learned the 'ins' and 'outs' of what it means to be a professor ... and how to effectively execute teaching [strategies] in the classroom"

Teshell K. Greene took the PFF certification as a teaching and research postdoctoral fellow in the Institutional Research and Academic Career Development (IRACDA) program at VCU. She is currently working as a Biology Lecturer at the University of Richmond.

What does the PFF program mean to you?

The first mention of the VCU PFF program was through my teaching and research fellowship at VCU. The curriculum of courses was a requirement for my teaching responsibilities in the IRACDA program. Now that I have gone through the program, I think of the PFF program as a place of valuable influence and growth for interested in teaching, especially those who have not had any formal training as such.

How did your experience in the PFF Program enhance your understanding of what it means to be faculty and impact your plans for a career in academia?

I learned the "ins" and "outs" of what it means to be a professor (tenure, non-tenure, visiting, term, etc.), research, teaching and service expectations and how to effectively execute teaching in the classroom. In the GRAD 602 course I was exposed to the culture of active learning strategies for enhanced student learning, ways to effectively execute and engage students with the material presented, and also how to properly access for their learning comprehension. After incorporating these strategies into a semester long biology course, the PFF program continues to encour-

age the way I structure and teach my classes.

How did experiences with the PFF Program and receipt of the PFF Program Certificate of Achievement give you an "edge" in your career?

I found that unlike my coworkers hired at the same time as myself that I am the only one who has completed a PFF certification program. As we prepare for the upcoming semester, I can already tell that I have an edge over the ones who are new faculty since I've had training in teaching related activities such as syllabus development, active learning incorporation into the classroom and how to use Blackboard. Moreover, I am more inclined and aggressive at exercising active learning strategies in my classes when compared to those who have not been exposed to such pedagogical approaches.

Tell us a little bit about your internship/externship experience and share with us the impact that the project and mentoring relationship had on you.

I taught a semester long introductory biology course of 50 students at Virginia State University during the Spring 2014 semester. I had a wonderful teaching mentor who understood and supported the importance of active learning to encourage independent student learning. Prior to the start of the semester we worked together to execute the components of a blended learning class and hit the ground running once the semester started. My mentor visited my class on several occasions to assess

my teaching and allowed me to sit in on several faculty administrative meetings. This externship experience provided a definite answer as to the kind of academic career that I wanted to pursue and how I would go about doing so.

What is the most crucial piece (or pieces) of advice that you would give students currently enrolled in the PFF Program coursework.

Take advantage of the GRAD 605 course that encourages the development of materials needed for a teaching portfolio. The feedback from the faculty members if beneficial and will be helpful when preparing your teaching portfolio for your GRAD 606 externship/internship and hiring package for the job search process. In addition, if you do teach a course during your internship/externship, do not hesitate to exercise what you learn in the PFF program. This is the "one" time you will have to test the waters before embarking on a full time faculty position.