

David V. Beckwitt, PhD Candidate

Email: David.Beckwitt@gmail.com

Phone: 417-612-1870

Teaching Philosophy

Physics often appears to pre-med and engineering students as an impersonal “stepping stone” course. I have always enjoyed engaging less-motivated learners through **compassionate, student-centered instruction that nurtures relationships** as much as it teaches physics. Significant learning rarely occurs without a meaningful relationship, and my methods reflect that belief. I apply strategies in two teaching contexts: small groups and large lectures.

One-on-one tutoring sessions and **small classes** (15 to 25 students) taught me that **learning is inherently social and contextual**. Working with diverse students (nurses, pre-med, physics, engineers, art) I found that informal rapport often unlocks engagement. Even reluctant learners become more receptive when they sense their instructor values them. This approach may reduce content time, but it enables deeper engagement and content retention.

Scaling rapport from small tutorials to **large sections** requires deliberate design. In classes over 100 students, I use lab sections to collect informal surveys on backgrounds, construct name tents, and intentionally create positive micro-interactions. I combine personal gestures - learning names and holding approachable office hours - with structured mechanisms such as anonymous polling and think-pair-share. Prompt and thoughtful responses to discussion boards builds trust. These techniques encourage participation and reveal misconceptions. I adjust the balance between connection and content based on course objectives.

In honors sections of twenty-five to thirty students, I adopted a **flipped-classroom model** under my advisor’s mentorship. Preparatory videos or readings introduce core concepts, and class time focuses on collaborative problem solving, lab explorations, and concise lectures for key derivations. Short quizzes and brief recaps ensure preparation. Inquiry-based tutorials, group projects, demonstration days, and simulations let students wrestle with ideas and explore parameters beyond typical labs.

Teaching is inseparable from service. I participated in **organizing demonstration days** that brought experiments to local schools and collaborated with our volunteer observatory. These events reinforce that teaching deepens learning and connect campus and community. Outreach demands extra logistics and time but enriches students’ sense of purpose, civic responsibility, and student retention with community.

Clarity and explicit expectations guide every class. Each lesson plan answers four questions:

1. **Outcome:** What should students do by the end?
2. **Evidence:** How will I measure mastery?
3. **Activities:** Which tasks develop the skills?
4. **Feedback:** How will I collect timely assessment data?

I see teaching as a dialogue: I share the physics curriculum and learn from student’s unique perspective. My objectives are to teach core concepts, inspire application in their careers, and cultivate the humility to accept not having all the answers.