

# Teachers in Agreement that D.Tech Doesn't Prepare Students For College

Dominic Carducci

March 11, 2020

## 1 The Bad

Many Teachers opine that D.Tech isn't preparing students for college. The complaints lodged against the school included that the school doesn't prepare you well for college. This was because of a lax education and lenient deadlines. Ms. Gentzke noted that she felt push back from students when they felt that the work load was too much. Some people rejected this altogether, Mr. Barella said that this isn't necessarily a bad aspect of the school, but a critique of the college system itself. Other negative aspects of the school that they noted were the following:

- CBL grading system is incompatible letter grades
- during FIT/labs there is a lot of off-task behavior
- the design/technical aspects of the school need to be fleshed out
- changes go in to effect sporadically
- changes that occur are hastily judged and have no time to mature
- feeling that the school is going two steps forward and one step back
- classes are over-crowded
- need a different relationship with Oracle
- retain a stable turnover rate
- students aren't currently reach for their best

A lengthy list! This doesn't mean D.Tech is a terrible school, and some of the problems are ones that are arguably inevitable or easily predicted. For example, the problem with the grading conversion isn't the schools fault, the blame lies there in the conservative nature of people in terms of grading. Some of these, in the author's opinion, are real problems. The design aspects of the school do need to be fleshed out, not only confined to the exploration classes during intersession. The fact that students are off task during FIT/lab days is not the school's fault, though it is true they could be more strict; one teacher said yes, there is a lot of goofing off going on, but he also that he's seen many creative projects coming from students.

## 2 The Good

Universally appreciated among all the teachers the writer interviewed was the fact that D.Tech's environment and culture was very dynamic. There is a willingness to be flexible that other schools simply don't have. Around the school as well, students aren't confined to the classroom. They have the choice to work outside or in breakout rooms, and as students know there is always something going on in the halls. This makes the school feel alive.

Other good aspects included the following:

- creative
- respectful environment
- intersession
- lab day

- advisory
- the idea that students should be in charge of their learning

When asked whether the changes in general were positive, compared to a normal high school, the answer was mostly a definitive yes.

### 3 The In-between

One interesting point to note, granted it was only about four that I had the chance to get around to asking this question to, was that all their futures at d.tech were uncertain. Mr. Donhost said his position was temporary, Ms. Sloane said we'll see, and Ms. Gentzke simply didn't know.

Sloane was the only person who mentioned the school needs to build out its more technical/design aspects. This is concerning for a school that prides itself on its design aspects, especially from a more technical teacher. D.Tech has no computer science department, not including prototyping.

When asked about their thoughts on the relationship with Oracle most hadn't given it too thought, which is encouraging. Going on to mention that Oracle doesn't have any influence on the board, and doesn't really influence decisions. The only negative effects listed were that the school has to worry about its image because of that relationship.

When asked whether they thought that the school was crowded, most didn't consider it a problem. One outright agreed, while saying that as long as classes were kept under their ideal number of students. One stating 32 students as a reasonable amount, another 25.

One change that seems to have taken place was that meetings among staff have gone down, compared to previous years. Teachers meet in the morning, far from seeing this as

a nuisance they state it's a positive check-in every morning.<sup>1</sup>

### 4 My Additions

The author's additions, if he was interviewed, would be these:

1. We need more creative labs during lab day. A couple ones I've seen are game hour unplugged, classic foreign films, and a T.V. show based on the short stories of Edgar Allen Poe. These need to be encouraged and expanded. A couple that come to mind are additional lessons on subjects the teacher just might find interesting or projects that span over multiple lab days that are led by teachers or upper class men.
2. D.labs need to be significantly improved. Right now they are, putting it bluntly, awful, at least in my experience. According to the website a "design lab is about learning how to create solutions to real challenges." Happy, human nature, shoes, meditation, that is about as far removed from that goal as I think you could get. D.labs need to be either significantly revamped or removed entirely.
3. Teachers should not ditch lectures in favor of youtube videos.
4. The small amount of textbooks that D.Tech does use, which is a problem in it of itself, are of very poor quality. Covering little information, more closely resembling a workbook than a textbook. CPM and the biozone physics textbooks need to be gotten rid of. The solution is not to throw students on some educational website, that is an equally impoverished means of learning.

---

<sup>1</sup>From now on it's more of the author's personal opinion, not the teachers.

5. Advisory serves little purpose academically, either have it meet less often or get rid of advisory for good.
6. It's absolutely ridiculous to throw all freshman in an elective: 1) because there are no electives besides photography, it'd be a stretch to call integrative leadership a class 2) freshman currently have no history class.
7. Lunches need to be longer than a half-hour, 40 minutes at least.
8. Get the ratio between boys and girls equal, either by encouraging more girls to join the lottery or by capping the number of boys, and girls, that are eligible to be drawn.
9. Squelch classes that discriminate on the basis of gender, like the d.lab modeling class, which only girls can join.
10. Get more strict on phones/airpods, not by taking phones away or requiring students to deposit their phones before class, but if their phone is out give them a detention, with no exceptions or questions asked.
11. Give teachers a way to quickly punish students that isn't a CAV, which honestly is a little humiliating for the teachers. At my old school you'd get a beautification, you had to go around the school and fill a bag with trash. Oh course that probably wouldn't work at d.tech, but something along those lines. Just overall punishments need to get more strict, clearly set the norms for the classroom and if students don't follow them they receive the appropriate consequences.
12. Give students the ability to bring their own computers and use them in class. Chrome OS is spyware, adding to that the fact that the admin receives logs of every website visited and even close tabs you have open on the computer. There are also numerous shortcomings of Chrome OS; in photography it's really nice to have a free photo editor like GIMP, well if students only had a Chromebook that option isn't available to them.
13. Get rid of the blocklists on the network, you simply can't block all the junk on the internet. All it does is impedes the progress of students who are browsing the internet for genuine reasons.<sup>2</sup>

## 5 Reflection

What's missing at this school is a more conservative approach to education. This does not mean increasing the amounts of standardized testing and homework, but expecting more out of students and teachers while in school. The teachers need to provide a decent lesson that requires a reasonable amount of work to achieve a decent grade. That includes reading and lectures from the teacher, not websites and independent learning. Quizzing the students to test their knowledge and basing the grade off the results, on how much they've learned. To gives examples, in English instead of doing these individualized projects we should double down on grammar, rhetoric, literature, and essays on topics related to the reading. In physics, take a more humanistic approach, increase the number of tests and quizzes, and pushing it back to a later grades when all students have the appropriate math background. I could go through all my classes, but the general direction of change should be quite clear.

For upper grades, as Mr. Donhost put it, "students need to be aware of offerings off campus." D.Tech, due to its size, can't offer the opportunities that other schools can. Students should not just be allowed to attend two

---

<sup>2</sup>To drive this home, blender.org is currently blocked.

classes then roam the halls the rest of the day. Either require them to go home or do classes online, CSM as well.

The main point is to address the major complaint about the school, I think all the other points are minuscule in comparison to this one. This school has potential, and the fact that this is a common sentiment among students among teachers further proves my point. We need to double down on academics, improving quality not quantity.