



Implementing Best Practices & Educating Lawyers: Teaching Skills and Professionalism Across the Curriculum

Workshop  
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Best Intentions, Worst Results:  
The Potential Pitfalls of Innovative Teaching

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Since 2001, Nancy Soonpaa has taught at Texas Tech University School of Law, where she directs and teaches in the Legal Practice Program, Health Law, Negotiating Workshop, and Family Law, and co-coaches its inter-school negotiation team.

Professor Soonpaa began teaching undergraduate writing courses at the University of North Dakota, taught for three years at the University of Puget Sound School of Law, and taught in the Lawyering Program at Albany Law School for six years. Her articles about legal writing often focus on effective pedagogical choices and learning theory and have appeared in several professional journals. She has also published an empirical study on law students and stress.

She is one of the editor-authors of the recently published second edition of the ABA's *Sourcebook on Legal Writing Programs*. In addition, she has presented at numerous professional conferences, including those of the Association of American Law Schools (including its new law teachers conference), the Legal Writing Institute, the Association of Legal Writing Directors, and the Institute for Law School Teaching.

She also co-coaches Tech's negotiation teams, one of which won the International Negotiation Competition in 2005; was on the ABA subcommittee that administers the regional and national competitions, and is on the International Negotiation Competition judging and administration committees. She also teaches CLEs and training workshops for other professional groups on writing and negotiation skills.

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## **Best Intentions, Worst Results: The Pitfalls and Rewards of Innovative Teaching**

### **Presentation Outline**

#### I. Introductory Story

#### II. Creative Teaching, Rewards, Pitfalls, and Pitfall Management

The purpose of the session is to discuss both the rewards and some of the potential pitfalls of innovative teaching and how to maximize the rewards and either manage the pitfalls or minimize/eliminate them.

- A. Using technology
- B. Offering multiple assessments
- C. Introducing concepts with creative non-law examples
- D. Incorporating small groups and peer assessment
- E. Choosing multiple readings instead of or in addition to a main casebook

#### III. A Broader View of Attempts and Failures in Teaching

Ultimately, the accumulated history of the rewards and pitfalls of innovative teaching translate into and form one's reputation as a teacher. But not all audiences assess one's teaching from the same perspective.

- A. How one assesses oneself as a teacher
- B. How students assess one as a teacher
- C. How other faculty assess one as a teacher

#### IV. Discussion

#### V. Conclusion

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