Why I Blog

For Students!

• Students can learn about my professional life outside of the classroom, that I do more than teach them for 50 minutes every MW.
• Students can learn about the “research” and “service” roles of a faculty member (and, sometimes, the additional “teaching” opportunities)
• For students to still feel connected to me while I am away, to still learn not only science but other pieces of information about the scientific community

For Myself!

• Provides me the opportunity to reflect on my conference/feldtrip experiences (I rarely have the time to reflect otherwise)
• Provides me an opportunity to document the sessions details, and my reflections capture what is most important to me and what I want to share with others

For Others!

• Provides an easy way to further disseminate what I learn, even beyond my classroom students

Expected Outcomes

• Students are reading – and learning! I did not expect students to “engage” with the blog by commenting. In fact, only two have posted comments to date, but I do have evidence they are reading the blog. Students will post on Twitter something related to my post, and/or they will ask me follow-up questions upon my return to campus. Some students have asked to see additional photos from the fieldtrips I have attended.
• Alumni continue to read/follow the blog: Of the students that started following me as undergraduates, they all continue to follow me as alumni and still ask questions or make comments in Twitter.
• Not many people are subscribing to email updates (and that’s OK!): As the majority of students I teach only have for one semester (rarely for more than three semesters), I do not expect them to subscribe, especially since I am away from a course only 1-2 times a semester. The students may only read the postings from when I am away, yet the blog provides the posts from my previous conferences and field experiences that students can explore and learn from. As the overarching goal of the blog is to help students understand the varied “hats” that faculty members play, especially relating to research, I am content if a student receives that introduction only once during one of my courses – it is an introduction they would not have received otherwise.

Unexpected Outcomes

• Campus staff subscribe to read the blog: It is more than students that are subscribing to my blog. One significant plus is that now the staff in the Public Relations office follow the blog and are aware of my professional activities. I no longer need to tell them or hope they hear about what I am doing – they are now receiving the updates when I am out of town, as updates are now being automatically being published as campus press releases. Staff are also sharing my stories in their offices before I return, and we staff waking up to me and asking about my trip. I am not only educating my students, but I am thrilled that the larger campus community is learning about my professional life and contributions as a campus representative.
• I go back and read my own entries: Like many conference attendees, I take notes at sessions I attend and then the notes seem to scatter after the conference, and I rarely go back and read them. By blogging each day I am away, I am able to capture more details, and my reflections capture what is most important to me and what I want to remember. I have found myself several times going back to previous conference postings and commenting (to myself), “I forgot I wanted to incorporate that topic the next time I teach this specific course.” The blog serves as valuable documentation of a conference – for my own benefit.
• Invited to share postings on other blogs: Organizations/blogs such as Nature ConferenceCast, ScienceOnline, and GSA’s Speaking of Geoscience link to my posts and have asked me to submit guest posts. I never expected to become part of a larger blogging community.

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