

Faculty profile



Victor Fazio, Bovard College, Criminal Justice

Victor Fazio teaches students to communicate complex ideas simply

In our recent faculty showcase, you discussed using a teaching strategy that challenges students to condense complex projects into a 30-second “Elevator Pitch.” Please tell us why you chose that strategy.

Giving an elevator pitch requires students to crystalize and convey their thoughts and approaches in solving societal challenges such as improving processes and enacting new policies within the criminal justice system. When students explain clearly and concisely how they plan on improving outcomes for all, it makes them focus on what is important and discard what is not.

Can you tell us a little bit about how you facilitate this activity and what criteria you look for in a good elevator pitch?

It’s really simple. I start early in the semester asking them to develop a proposal to solve a complex problem, then let them mull it over as we progress through the semester. I tell them to imagine they have one shot at convincing someone of the value of their project in forty-five seconds, or, in other words, the time it takes to travel a few floors in an elevator. Students spend time before class working on their “pitch” and rehearsing with their peers. The components of their pitch include:

- What is the current situation?
- Why is the change needed?
- What will be changed?
- Who will be affected?
- What is the rationale and is it evidence-based?

- How will success be defined?

What advice do you have for instructors in other disciplines who are interested in doing something similar?

I would advise other instructors to try this technique before they ask their students to do so. This allows instructors to develop a model for the assignment and anticipate challenges students may encounter. Then, I would suggest they model their elevator pitch for the students to see and hear what it looks like.

Tips from CET

If you would like to implement this in your course, consider scaffolding the assignment using the steps below. (Scaffolding refers to breaking assignments into smaller steps that provide students practice and feedback as they develop a new skill.)

1. Develop and model your own elevator pitch for students, making note of grading criteria.
2. Encourage students to practice their pitches individually multiple times.
3. Provide in-class opportunities for peer-to-peer feedback on their pitches in one or all the following formats
 - One-on-one
 - Small groups
 - Whole class presentation
4. Grade students' final pitches, based on the grading criteria.

If you'd like to learn more about Victor Fazio's use of the Elevator Pitch watch his [faculty showcase video](#).

[Victor Fazio](#) teaches in the criminal justice department at Bovard College. He has over 25 years of experience in law enforcement in Southern California, where he is a captain with the Ventura County Sheriff's Office.