STATEMENT OF TEACHING:

Since arriving at U of Utah, I have taught the Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) pre-practicum and CBT practicum courses at the graduate level as well as a core child and family therapy class focused on behavior analytic principles and procedures. I find these classes immensely rewarding because, for many students, this practicum is the first opportunity learning to conceptualize cases and conduct therapy from a clinical science approach. In addition to discussion and practice in the application of BT/CBT techniques, this course involves in-depth discussions of how various theoretical frameworks are consistent or inconsistent with the students’ existing views and/or experiences. I challenge students to develop a strong theoretical “identity” (usually by writing and revising a personal manifesto) because I strongly believe that to be a good clinical scientist, students much develop an empirically informed theoretical orientation from which to conceptualize cases rather than simply learn to apply a broad range of specific techniques. Consistent with this, my supervisory style is a balance of supporting the students to have the confidence to make independent decisions (and mistakes) with instruction/direction and modeling. My goal is not to teach the students “how to do therapy by the book” but to teach them to conceptualize a case, apply conceptually appropriate techniques, to monitor a client’s progress, and to help their clients by flexibly applying empirically supported techniques.

My approach to undergraduate education (teaching psych 1010) is to challenge students to become more scientifically-minded and critical consumers of information as it relates to behavioral and social sciences. I spend considerable time on "psych as a science" issues and concepts as they relate to our everyday understanding of human behavior (defined broadly to include emotion, thought, social interactions, etc.) I see the various topics covered in the textbook chapters (language, cognition, motivation & emotion, biological bases, social psych, intelligence, personality, etc.) as a way to provide broad coverage of how to think about these things critically and scientifically more so than teaching facts or concepts. I tend to spend a great deal of time talking about research methods and critical thinking before we divulge into, and critically evaluate, the topical chapters. By the end of the course, I hope that the students will think critically about how we understand psychological phenomenon and have the skills to critically evaluate the multitude of claims that bombard us on a daily basis- both in the media and in our everyday experiences. I particularly emphasize the importance of understanding that behavior is complex, difficult to predict (but can be predicted), is multiply determined and influenced though complex interactions between biology and experience. Rather then emphasizing the learning of facts and concepts, I try to get the students to learn to think about these complex and dynamic interactions between these various influences (biology, behavior, development, culture, social influence), to challenge their assumptions, to think in a more complex- and scientific- way about the world around them. Rather than regurgitating facts about psychology, my goal is- upon completion of the course- to get students to be more comfortable with the fact that the answer to many of the most important questions about human behavior is "it's complicated and depends upon a lot of factors."

Finally, over the past 2 years, I have welcomed opportunities to advise and mentor students in practical application courses. At any given time, I supervise 6-10 undergraduate students who are enrolled as research assistants. I also supervise 3 graduate students. These students are an integral part of my research laboratory. Both undergraduate and graduate students in my lab have the opportunity to be involved in the entire research process from conceptualization to data collection to data analysis to interpretation to reporting and presenting the results. I use a junior colleague model with my graduate students and, though supportive, I have high expectations that all of the work they generate and produce represents their highest quality
work. I believe that this approach teaches responsibility and ownership over their work and also fosters generativity and excitement in the research process. My graduate students have each submitted or published a first-authored paper, they each have multiple publications (range 2-8), and they are putting together impressive CVs that will make them competitive in the academic job market. In addition, I recently supervised an ambitious undergrad through the UROP program who completed a study (from start to finish) which resulted in a publication in the Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis (see Himle and Wright, 2014)- which is the flagship journal in the discipline and a difficult publication outlet.