SOTE Strategies
This document provides tips from School of Information students and faculty members for effective teaching as identified in the SOTE (Student Opinion of Teaching Effectiveness) questionnaire. Ideas are organized by the SOTE questions.

This instructor...

1. demonstrated relevance of the course content

Include examples and anecdotes. These can be from your own professional experience, current newsworthy items (perhaps gleaned from blogs, discussion lists, or journals), or examples of how previous students have said they found the information to be useful.

Use practical assignments and reiterate how these will benefit students later when they are on the job.

Explain why the information or assignment is valuable.

2. used assignments that enhanced learning

Break up big projects into smaller assignments that build on each other.

Create assignments that are relevant to the course objectives and allow for practical application of the theory being studied. Avoid the appearance of “busy work.”

3. summarized/emphasized important points

Provide lectures that highlight important parts of the readings and give your professional opinion on the topics being studied. Notes to accompany the lecture can be helpful, too.

In discussion areas, provide comments to summarize or focus topics in student posts.

Reiterate important concepts.

4. was responsive to questions and comments from students

Provide timely responses. Post your policy regarding how long it will take you to respond to emails or discussion posts.

Subscribe to discussion forums and reply in a timely manner.
Offer a variety of communication formats (e.g., email, discussion forums, text messaging, Facebook).

Respond respectfully and cordially to students. Avoid giving answers that make students feel awkward about posting their questions.

5. **established an atmosphere that facilitated learning**

Be patient, positive, and encouraging when responding to student questions and comments.

Share your own experiences with the students.

Maintain an active presence in the discussion forums.

Create a well-organized course site (including the plans for readings and assignments).

Set up opportunities for students to interact and learn from each other.

6. **was approachable for assistance**

(Also see related strategies listed for item #4.)

Respond in a timely manner to emails and other communications.

Offer multiple forms of contact (e.g., email, discussion forum, phone).

7. **was responsive to the diversity of the students in this class**

Treat all students with respect regardless of differences of gender, race, or age.

Avoid favoring students with greater levels of experience with library work or who are specializing in a particular area.

Pay attention to student self-introductions and be aware of differing backgrounds.

Offer options to students in areas such as choice of topics, assignments, or synchronous meeting times.

8. **showed strong interest in teaching this class**

Communicate enthusiasm about the course topic.

Maintain an active presence in the class through providing updated content and timely communications.
9. used intellectually challenging teaching methods

Use assignments that:

- Challenge students to use what they’ve read and encourage creative thinking.
- Create the opportunity to do something with a reading rather than just read it and answer questions or repeat back the main ideas.
- Have a variety of formats (written, audio, visual)
- Strongly link theory to real-world examples
- “Make us think” and find answers

Use a variety of teaching methods and media (written, audio, visual)

Design discussion questions that encourage conversations and where students can apply ideas to their own experience. These may be on controversial topics.

10. used fair grading methods

Provide very clear assignment instructions with details about expectations. Examples are very helpful.

Use rubrics. Provide the grading criteria when the assignment is made and again when feedback is given.

With group work, provide a method that makes each group member personally accountable for their contribution.

11. helped students analyze complex/abstract ideas

Use concrete, realistic examples and analogies, especially those from the instructor’s personal experience

Provide supplemental materials such as lectures/explanations, study guides, and sample assignments.

Build on prior knowledge and concepts covered earlier in the class.

12. provided meaningful feedback about student work

Give positive comments as well as constructive criticism.

Be specific. Rather than saying "good work," refer to what was done well. Give specifics on what needs to be improved and include concrete suggestions for improvement.

Add comments and/or rubrics to the students’ Word documents.