

**SOURCEBOOK FOR FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR INSTRUCTION
CORE LEARNING *PRINCIPLES*, KEY TEACHING *CONNECTIONS*, &
EFFECTIVE PEDAGOGICAL *PRACTICES***

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INSTRUCTOR RESOURCE BOOK FOR TEACHING THE FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR

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“TOP TEN” TIPS FOR TEACHING THE FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR

1. Personalize the course—make it the class where “everybody knows your name,” (or, “where everybody knows everybody’s name”).

As soon as possible, (a) learn your students’ names, (b) learn something personal about them, and (c) have them meet each other. (See the Appendix A for name-learning strategies.) As a strategy for learning something personal about each of your students, see Appendix B, The “*Student Information Sheet*,” as a strategy. Project the information card on an overhead projector, read one question at a time, and have students write their answer to it on a sheet of paper. Write your own answers to the same questions on the blackboard so they get to learn something about you. Collect their answers at the end of class, read them at home, highlighting interesting or memorable information on each student.

During the next (second) class session, call out each student’s name and ask a question about something s/he had written on the information sheet (e.g., “How long did you live in Oregon?”).

This shows all students that you took the time to read carefully their information cards. Also, when you call on each student’s name to ask them a question from their information sheet, you can make a quick note on the sheet about something that may help you remember that student’s name (e.g., “hippie,” “earring,” “glamorous”).

This process usually takes about 15-20 minutes—or the first half of class.

For the last half of the second class session, distribute a list containing one statement that each student has written about him/herself. Have all students go around the room with a copy of the list—to find the classmate that “belongs to” each statement on the list—and to record that classmate’s name next to his/her statement. This procedure allows students to meet personally each and every other student in class and learn something personal about them. Also, when students see something about themselves “in print,” it tends to be a very flattering and validating experience, which makes them feel significant. I call this procedure the “*Classmate Scavenger Hunt*”—see Appendix E for explicit directions for this activity and a sample list of student statements that was used in my class hunt last year. (You might even consider putting a statement about yourself on the list and join the icebreaker—so that students find out something they didn’t know about you—and to reinforce the credibility of the activity.)

2. Individualize the course—make it a class in which students have some *personal*

choice about what they learn.

For example:

- > During the first week of class, have students rank *topics* in terms of their relevance or interest to them, and attempt to spend more class time on students' highly-ranked topics.
- > When course topics are encountered during the term, have students rate or rank *subtopics* they would be most interested in, and attempt to accommodate their preferences.
- > When assigning projects or papers, try to provide students with a *topic "menu"* from which they may choose the one(s) that most interest them—e.g., students who pick a similar topic could be teamed together to complete a group project on their topic of common interest.

Research strongly suggests that when students are allowed some personal choice, control, or self-determination with respect to their learning experience, they become more *intrinsically motivated* to learn.

3. Make it a reflective course in which students not only acquire information, but also are encouraged to step back, take stock, react to, or reflect on what they're learning.

The "minute paper" questions included in the *Sourcebook* may be very effective for promoting student reflection at the end of a class session. (They are also a good way to take attendance without formally "calling roll" or having students "sign in.") You can convert these minute-paper sheets into transparencies and project them on a screen or wall at the end of class, thus saving yourself blackboard writing time (and possible chalk-dust inhalation).

4. Make it a student-centered course in which students work independent of the teacher, and assume more personal responsibility for their own learning, by occasionally "sharing the stage" with students, or allowing students to move to "center stage."

When college faculty in a wide variety of academic disciplines were interviewed about their course planning strategies, it was found that they "barely mentioned making choices among instructional strategies" (Stark et al., 1990, p. 145). This habit should not be repeated in the freshman-seminar course planning process. As much forethought should be given to *how* instruction will be delivered as to what material will be covered; the *process* of teaching is as important to student learning as its content.

When planning your selection of instructional methods for the freshman seminar, it may be useful to conceive of classroom teaching techniques as ranging along a continuum from *instructor-centered* to *student-centered*. Extreme, instructor-centered teaching is best illustrated by the uninterrupted, formal lecture whereby the instructor does all the talking and is in complete control of the class agenda. In contrast, student-centered classroom instruction involves less instructor domination and shifts more communication, control, and responsibility to the students. While, I acknowledge that lecturing may be the method of teaching that we are most familiar

with, and most comfortable with, because it gives a sense of class control (monologue is less risky than dialogue), I think we need to deviate from tradition and take some risks in the first-year seminar, because its class size and course objectives are different than those of discipline-centered, content-driven courses. Probably the best general rule to follow when planning the teaching process for the seminar is to use *active, student-centered* learning strategies as much as possible.

For example:

- (a) Have students engage in *small-group work* (e.g., after reading a powerful passage or case study) and have individual groups report back their work products to the whole class.
- (b) Let your students *come “up front”* and do some teaching—by making individual or group presentations to the class—particularly on topics that are familiar to them (e.g., college stressors, dating/romance, substance use/abuse).
- (c) Instead of relying exclusively on the “*straight lecture*,” use what I call the “*shared lecture*,” whereby students first share what they know (or think they know) about the topic. Students often have some familiarity or experience with many topics covered in the freshman seminar, and this can be capitalized on—to draw them into the learning process—and draw out their prior knowledge (and misconceptions—e.g., about how to learn, remember, or manage time. After students have contributed their ideas, then your prepared material, identifying ideas that students have already anticipated by underlining (and validating) them, then adding your ideas (from lecture notes) to create a jointly produced composite or “master list,” which reflects the *shared* efforts of both students and instructor.

5. Make it an experiential course, whereby students get the opportunity for some direct, “hands on” learning experiences.

For example, build-in *course assignments* that promote experiential learning, such as: conducting interviews with faculty, staff, or students from different cultural backgrounds; shadowing someone in an intended career profession; and service learning projects.

6. Bring variety to the course.

(a) Use *multiple* methods of *teaching/learning*—e.g., mini-lectures, whole-class discussions, small-group discussions, paired peer interactions, self-reflection exercises, role plays, case studies, guest speakers, panel presentations, open forums. Such variety not only contributes to improved student interest and motivation, it also more serves to accommodate their different learning styles.

(b) Use *multiple* methods of *student evaluation and grading*—e.g., quizzes and exams involving different test-question formats (multiple-choice, essays, etc.) and drawn from different sources (class lectures, discussions, assigned readings, etc.); in-class exercises and out-of-class assignments; individual and group projects/presentations. Such variety and balance serves not only to increase the comprehensiveness of assessment, it also serves to increase its validity—because it incorporates multiple measures and indices of student learning.

(c) Use *multimedia*—e.g., overhead transparencies, power point, educational videos, relevant TV or movie segments, artifacts, audiotapes or CDs. Such variations provide changes of routine and shifts in postural position which tend to capture student attention, keeping the learner more awake, alert, and motivated.

In particular, timely use of *visual* aids, images and illustrations may be an extremely effective teaching tool because it can provide concrete illustrations of abstract concepts—giving them a tangible presence. It also allows the concept to be processed in a dual code (semantically and visually), resulting in storage of double memory traces in the brain. Moreover, there is evidence that alternating information presentation between aural (semantic) and visual modalities tends to increase human attention to the information being presented.

Pictures culled from books, magazines, periodicals, newspapers, and the Internet that may be used to illustrate textbook topics (e.g., a “map” of the brain to illustrate the concept of multiple intelligences). As instructors, perhaps one element of our class preparation might be the identification and collection of an arsenal of poignant pictures or images that may be used to reinforce, extend, and enrich our class presentations.

Another way to capitalize on the educative power of vision is through the use of “concept maps” designed to graphically organize or summarize multifaceted concepts, and to depict the relationships among them in diagrammatic form. For example, the holistic development/wellness wheel can effectively integrate the curricular and co-curricular components of the college experience and depict how they contribute to the development of the “whole person.” I realize that we are not graphic designers, but we are capable of conceptualizing or visualizing basic concept maps (e.g., flow charts, spider-web diagrams) that could effectively depict some of our more important and complex course concepts. Once conceived and roughly sketched out, we could then turn to our desktop publishing department on campus to help us transform these sketches into bona fide concept maps.

(d) Incorporate *periodic* presentations from different *guest speakers*. New faces can provide some instructional variety, introduce students to key support-and-development professionals, and take some of the teaching load off you—particularly on topics that are far from your area of expertise. To prepare students for the speaker, ask them to construct at least one question in advance of the presentation. Also, you can keep track of spontaneous questions or concerns that students have raised in class that relate to the speaker’s topic, and submit these to the speaker as additional agenda items. These questions could be given to the speaker as topics to be covered during the presentation, or time could be reserved for students to ask their questions during their presentation. Possible guest speakers and topics they could address include the following:

- * Library Professional (Academic Services)
- * Learning Center Professional (Academic Services or Cognitive Development)
- * Director of Student Development Services or Student Activities (Co-Curriculum)
- * Honors Students (Academic Success Strategies)
- * Personal Counseling Services (Social or Emotional Development)
- * Career Counseling/Vocational Development
- * Psychology Department (Improving Attention/Concentration/Memory)

- * Philosophy Department (Moral Reasoning & Ethical Development)
- * Academic Dean (Meaning & Value of Liberal Arts/General Education)
- * Campus Ministry (Spiritual Development)
- * Health Services (Physical Development/Wellness)

If you do use a guest speaker, consider having that person videotaped by an A-V worker or student if your class. This may enable other class sections to “see” your guest speaker without burdening that same person with the redundant task of making multiple visits to different classes. Also, you can use the video as a vehicle for assessing your students’ listening and note-taking skills by playing it back and identifying segments of the presentation when key information was delivered that should have appeared in their notes.

(e) Use a variety of *student-assessment methods*.

The following practices are recommended for providing multiple and varied assessments of student performance in the first-year seminar.

- * Devise assignments that require students to express or communicate knowledge in different modes (e.g., written reports, oral reports, slide or video presentations).
- * Construct assignments that require students to work both individually (e.g., personal journals) and in groups or teams (e.g., group projects or group presentations). Research indicates that students vary appreciably in terms of what evaluation procedures they feel most comfortable with (Lowman, 1984; McKeachie, 1986) so, by not using one method exclusively, you are sure to include at least something that appeals to everyone.
- * Construct exams that are comprised of different types of test questions, including essays and “objective” test items (e.g., multiple choice). Using both types of questions will result in a more balanced assessment of different cognitive skills. Essays will require students to recall information and produce or supply answers on their own, while multiple-choice items will require students to recognize information and select discriminately from already-supplied alternatives.

The point is, there is no absolute or clear-cut advantage associated with choosing one or the other of these basic types of test questions, so test construction in the freshman seminar should not involve an either-or decision between these two testing formats. Instead, a combination of them will enable students to exercise different academic skills. Multiple-choice questions typically place more emphasis on critical reading and analytical reasoning skills, while essay questions place more emphasis on writing and the cognitive skills of integration or synthesis. Such balance will result in more reliable assessment—by offsetting the testing disadvantages of one format with the advantages of the other, and more equitable assessment—by not exposing students to a testing format that focuses heavily on only one type of academic or cognitive skill—one that may not coincide with the student's personal strength, aptitude, or learning style. (For example, a student whose writing skills are not yet well developed may be unduly penalized by a course in which all exams are comprised entirely of essay questions.)

7. Do not using the lecture method on topics that relate to the need for students to *make changes in their attitude or behavior* (e.g., self-discipline, personal responsibility, character development.)

Being “lectured” to by an authority figure on topics such as these can often lead to student resistance and defensiveness. Instead, attempt to cover (or uncover) these topics via self-assessment exercises and small-group discussions. Research has repeatedly shown that students do not change their attitudes, modify their behavior, or develop their “character” by listening to lectures. These educational objectives are more effectively achieved when students actively engage in personal reflection and interpersonal interaction.

8. Maintain flexibility.

For instance, if an animated class discussion happens to emerge on an unplanned topic that still relates to the goals of the course, then “go with the flow” rather than “short-circuit” it in order to stick rigidly to the scheduled lesson for the day. It might even be useful to schedule one or two class sessions as “open forums,” which allow students to set their own agenda by raising any questions or concerns they have about their first experiences in college. (Naturally, parameters or ground rules may have to be set for such sessions—e.g., no citing names of particular individuals; each complaint cited must be followed by suggested solutions or remedies before another complaint is raised).

9. Share your personal experiences.

Concepts covered in the first-year seminar lends themselves naturally to sharing of our college personal experiences, both as former first-year students and as current professionals working with first-year students. Our sharing of relevant personal experiences in class serves to humanize the classroom experience and capitalize on the attention-grabbing power of self-disclosure. Furthermore, by sharing our experiences, we are modeling the very behavior that we hope students will engage in during the course, and increasing the likelihood that students will emulate and reciprocate the personal authenticity we display. Lastly, personal anecdotes effectively promote *learning*, because they provide students with real, “human” examples that concretely illustrate course concepts. The late Kenneth Eble, a well-regarded scholar on the process of teaching, eloquently captures the educational value of the anecdote:

The personal anecdote that illuminates an idea or clarifies a concept is neither ego-indulgence nor more wandering from truth. The personal is a way of gaining the kind of interest absolutely necessary to learning. Moreover, an anecdotal account of how some aspect of the subject matter itself came to have value for the teacher exerts a powerful force upon the student to grant that subject matter personal worth (Eble, 1976, *The Craft of Teaching*, p. 13).

10. Maintain and display your sense of humor.

Incorporation of *humor* into the first-year seminar teaching and learning process is highly recommended. Fear of being perceived as “unprofessional” or “losing control” of the class may

inhibit some instructors from incorporating content-relevant and socially appropriate humor in the classroom. Remember, something funny is not necessarily something frivolous. If you have a humorous *personal anecdote* that is related to, or illustrative of, the concept under discussion, don't hesitate to share it. Since humor is so rarely found in the "serious" realm of academic textbooks and lectures, the sheer element of incongruity or surprise alone is often enough to ensure student laughter.

Also, use of concept-relevant *cartoons* can command immediate student attention to the concept being taught, as well as provide an effective (and affective) visual illustration of the concept that should serve to enhance its retention (memory). Numerous cartoons about the college experience in general, and the first-year experience in particular, can be found in newspapers, periodicals, journals, books, and Internet sites. They can be easily transformed into very visible overhead projections by cutting them out, enlarging them, and then photocopying them onto a transparency sheet. Cartoons may be used in the following educationally effective ways:

- (a) To "punctuate" lectures class presentations with concept-relevant humor that maintains or regains student attention;
- (b) By having a cartoon already projected before class begins to serve as an attention-grabbing prompt for students while they mill into the classroom, thereby creating a positive first impression of the class lesson, as well as inducing a jovial mood (by elevating brain chemicals known as endorphins) and a sense of anticipatory excitement (by elevating adrenaline);
- (c) As tension cutters on *exams*;
- (d) As *office-door decorations* to reduce student trepidation and increase student motivation to seek contact with you outside the classroom. (Note: student-faculty contact outside the classroom is a factor that has been strongly linked to students' retention, academic achievement, and educational aspirations).

So, be sure to cut-out your favorites out and use them as overhead transparencies in class, as tension-cutters on quizzes or exams, to adorn class handouts, the syllabus, or your office door. These small gestures serve to build rapport with the class, promote retention of course concepts illustrated by the cartoon and, most importantly, show students that you are human.

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SUGGESTED STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING STUDENT INTEREST IN & MOTIVATION FOR THE FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR

- ◆ *Intercept or “short-circuit”* potential negative perceptions of the course by addressing them *in print*—in the course syllabus, and *in person*—during the first week of class.

Listed below is a series of points that could be made to serve this purpose.

1. Point out that there are many *research* studies on new-student seminars or student success courses, which demonstrate that *student retention* (persistence to college graduation) and *academic performance* (GPA) are significantly higher for students who take this course.
2. Highlight the fact that the course has emerged from an *international movement* (the “first-year experience”), which is designed to enhance the success of *all students*. So, the course is *not* “remedial;” students attending selective colleges also take courses like this.
3. Remind students that this is more than just a student-success course; it is a *life-success* course because many of the topics covered are relevant to life after college. To confirm this argument, suggest to them that if they browse through the self-improvement section of any popular bookstore they will find best-selling, up-to-date books (e.g., Stephen Covey’s *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*), which deal with the very same topics as those in the freshman seminar. So, if students are able to put into practice even just a few ideas discussed in the course, they should improve their success in both college and life.
4. Point out to students that the course focuses on the development of *skills, strategies, habits, and attitudes*, which are (a) *transferable*—that have the versatility and flexibility to be applied to different academic subjects and professional careers, and (b) *durable*—that are likely to endure the test of time and be retained long after the course ends (unlike courses that emphasize memorization of factual information).
5. Inform students that this is a unique course and will probably be the only college course in which the content derives from, and centers on the *person* taking the class—the *student*—rather than on an external body of knowledge that reflects the academic interests and priorities of scholars and researchers in a particular field of study. As one former student anonymously wrote in an evaluation of the freshman seminar, “This was the only course that was about me.”
6. To counteract student complaints that the course should not be mandatory, point out that this

not the only mandatory course in the college curriculum—it's just one of many general-education requirements (and one that has *more research support* for its positive impact on student success than any of the other courses they are “forced” to take). Just as students are required to learn how to “do math” in their required math courses, it's reasonable that they should be required to learn how to “do college” in this course.

7. To combat complaints that the course is covering material that is “simple,” “obvious,” or just “common sense”: (a) Remind them that it's precisely because some of these ideas are so simple and basic that they are *often overlooked or ignored*. (One freshman seminar instructor with a Ph.D. in the field of learning and memory confesses to his class that he has picked up useful tips on learning, memory, and time management as a result of teaching the course, and the course has made him aware of other ineffective habits that he still needs to correct!). (b) Give them a *pre-test* during the first week of class on concepts to be discussed in the course, and score (but do not grade) the test to demonstrate to students that they do not already know everything (or even most things) that will be explored in the course.

8. Cite *quotes* taken from the *course evaluations of students in previous classes* that can serve as testimony for the course's value, and/or *bring former students to class* who you know had valued the course (e.g., an alumni panel).

9. Employ teaching strategies that are known to enhance students' *intrinsic interest* in the learning process, such as the following:

- a) instructional *variety*—e.g., multi-media, guest speakers, panels, debates, self-reflection, case studies, role plays, simulations, open forums (more details provided in next section);
- b) *student-centered* learning activities that take the instructor “off stage”—e.g., self-assessment exercises, paired peer interactions, & small-group work;
- c) *personal choice* in the learning process—e.g., students self-select topics for projects/reports; students select/rank from a menu of topics those they would like for the instructor to cover in class (more details provided in next section);
- d) *personalized* learning—e.g., instructor-student and student-student ice-breakers and community-building experiences; this should be the class where everyone knows everyone else's name (more details provided in next section);
- e) *experiential* learning (e.g., opportunities for “hand on” learning experiences such as student-conducted interviews; cross-cultural encounters; service-learning projects).

IDENTIFYING & IMPLEMENTING THE MOST POTENT PRINCIPLES of STUDENT *LEARNING, MOTIVATION, and RETENTION*

Principle #1. *ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT*

Student learning, motivation, and retention are enhanced when students are *actively engaged* with the subject matter they are attempting to learn.

Principle #2. *SOCIAL INTEGRATION*

Student learning, motivation, and retention are enhanced when students *interact* with their *instructor* and *peers* during the learning process.

THREE KEY TEACHING “*CONNECTIONS*” THAT PROMOTE THE PRINCIPLES OF *ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT & SOCIAL INTEGRATION*

I.

THE STUDENT-INSTRUCTOR CONNECTION

Teaching practices that increase the *quantity* (frequency) and *quality* (depth) of interpersonal interactions between (a) students and the *course instructor*, and (b) students and *key support agents in the college community* (i.e., college faculty, academic-support specialists, student development professionals, and college-success role models), both inside and outside the classroom.

II.

THE STUDENT-STUDENT (*PEER*) CONNECTION

Teaching practices that increase the *quality* (depth) and *quantity* (frequency) of interpersonal interactions *between students*, both inside and outside the classroom.

III.

THE STUDENT-COURSE (SUBJECT MATTER) CONNECTION

Teaching practices that increase the *quality* (depth) and *quantity* (frequency) of student *involvement* with *course content* (i.e., time “on task”), both inside and outside the classroom.

TEACHING PRACTICES THAT PROMOTE THE STUDENT-INSTRUCTOR CONNECTION

Note that many of the suggestions in this section for promoting student-instructor interaction involve building *interpersonal rapport* with students. Instructor-student rapport may be viewed as a precondition for active student involvement in the learning process, and for student-faculty interaction inside and outside the classroom. If students feel comfortable relating to you, they will be more responsive to your attempts to interact with them, and to actively involve them in the learning process. As Tom Angelo (1993) states it, “Most students have to believe teachers know and care about them before they can benefit from interactions—or even interact” (p. 13).

Suggested Strategies:

- ◆ If you can access the e-mail addresses of student who have registered for your class, consider sending them a *personal welcome letter* before the course begins.

- ◆ On the *first day* of class, when verbally previewing the course, *explicitly encourage* out-of-class interaction with students by *emphasizing your availability* outside the classroom, and by *inviting* students to visit you in your office.

Make specific mention of your office hours and office phone number on the first day of class, and make it clear that individual appointments can be arranged if listed office hours conflict with a student’s out-of-class responsibilities (e.g., work; child care). Taking time during the very first class session to state that you welcome interaction with students outside of class may serve as an explicit signal to them that you genuinely value such interactions. This sends a much stronger and more sincere message than simply listing office hours on the syllabus—which students may see merely as a perfunctory fulfillment of departmental or institutional requirements.

- ◆ During the early stages of the course, *schedule* students for a *personal office visit or conference*.

Personal conferences or meetings could be designed to serve some specific academic function (e.g., to discuss selection of a paper topic or research project) but, perhaps more importantly, it can serve as an early icebreaker that “warms up” students to you and allows them to feel more comfortable about interacting with you outside of class. If anything, requiring this initial conference at least insures that each student will discover where your office is located on campus, and guarantees that all students—not only the most socially assertive ones—make at least one office visit during the semester.

To save yourself time, and to facilitate student-student interaction, you can schedule *group*

conferences in which several students meet with you at the same time. For instance, appointments could be made with teams of 3-4 students for an office visit in order to conference with you about their plans for an upcoming group project.

- ◆ Try to arrange your teaching schedule so that you are *available to students immediately after class*.

This may be a critical time for student-faculty interaction because it comes right after student interest, curiosity, or confusion may have been sparked by course material just covered in class that day. It is at this time that students are often likely to seek clarification on concepts covered in class, or to engage in extended discussion of some provocative issue raised during class. Course-related, student-instructor interaction immediately after class may also lead to greater willingness on the part of students to seek further contact with you outside the classroom (e.g., office visitation).

- ◆ *Learn students' names, and refer to students by name.* (See Appendix A for name-learning strategies).
- ◆ Learn and remember *personal information about individual students*.
This may be accomplished by means of the *student-information sheet*, which allows you to get to know individual students by collecting recorded information from each one of them about their personal background, unique qualities, skills, interests, future educational and vocational plans, course expectations, etc. Where appropriate, you may share similar information about yourself with the class. (See Appendix B for a more detailed description)
- ◆ Honestly acknowledge *students' feelings* (e.g., you seem a little tired or down today).
- ◆ Do not be afraid to use course-relevant *humor* (e.g., project cartoons relating to the topic being discussed).
- ◆ *Share your personal experiences* with students (e.g., course-relevant anecdotes).
- ◆ Consider sharing your *home phone number* and *home e-mail address* with students (e.g., on the course syllabus).
- ◆ Use assigned *journals* as a vehicle for carrying on a “written dialogue” with individual students (by responding to their entries). This written conversation can occur on paper or on line (i.e., electronic journals).
- ◆ Deliver *personalized feedback* to students (e.g., personal comments written on returned exams and assignments, or in response to student journal entries).

- ◆ Communicate personally with students by *phone* or via *e-mail*.
Electronic communication may provide an outlet for students who lack the confidence or assertiveness to speak up during classroom discussions—where they are in full view of a large number of people.
 - ◆ Invite students to *help you research answers* to questions they have raised during class or after class.
This practice serves not only to increase the quantity of student-faculty contact outside the classroom, it also enhances the quality of such contact because it involves interaction on substantive course-related issues.
 - ◆ Occasionally, make yourself available to students *on their “turf” or territory* (e.g., student cafeteria, union, or lounge).
This sends a message to students that you do not consider it to be below your dignity to associate or “hang out” with them. Instead, it suggests that you may actually enjoy interacting with students, because you are electing to spend some of your “free” or discretionary time with them.
 - ◆ Consider inviting students to *your home* (e.g., for a pot-luck dinner or and exam-review session).
 - ◆ *Participate in co-curricular* experiences with students (e.g., campus workshops, intramural sports, student elections, campus pep rallies), and *announce your intention* to participate in class prior to an upcoming event.
This practice should serve to stimulate student participation in co-curricular experiences, and enables students to see you in a different light—one in which the “prestigious” professor and the “subordinate” students are now on equal terms. Participating with students in such informal, non-threatening activities allows them so see you as a “regular person.” Seeing you in this light may make students feel less intimidated about interacting with you outside of class on issues that are course-related or personal in nature.
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TEACHING PRACTICES THAT PROMOTE THE STUDENT-STUDENT (PEER) CONNECTION

- ◆ *Ice-Breakers*: social “warm-up” activities, designed to “break the ice,” promote *team-building*, and foster a sense of class *community*.

Examples:

- > “*3-Step Interview*”: working in pairs, students introduce themselves to each other, then take turns introducing their partner to the class.

- > “*Classmate Scavenger Hunt*”: using information gathered via the student-information card, instructor constructs a list of statements, each of which describes something about one student in class. Milling around the room, students then attempt to find the person in class who “matches” (belongs to) each description. (See Appendix E for more detailed directions, and for additional types of icebreakers.)
- ◆ *Dyadic (2-Member) Interactions Between Pairs of Students*
 - e.g., “*Pairs-Share*”: students pair-up to share their thoughts in response to an instructor-posed question.
- ◆ *Small-Group (3-4 Member) Discussions*
 - e.g., “*Pairs-Square*”: previously-formed pairs of students now join together to form a “square” (quad) and aggregate their separate thoughts into a master list.
- ◆ *Collaborative Learning: Reaching Consensus in Small Groups*
 - e.g., Students move beyond simply aggregating or compiling their ideas, attempting to reach group consensus on how best to classify, prioritize, or synthesize their individual ideas.
- ◆ *Cooperative “Team” Learning: Group members assume interdependent roles and work together toward the completion of a common (unified) product.*
 - e.g., “*Jigsaw*”: each member of the group is responsible for bringing one particular “piece” or component of work to the team’s final product.
- * Note #1. For more cooperative learning formats, see the handbook titled: “*Igniting Student Involvement, Peer Interaction, and Teamwork: A Taxonomy of Specific Cooperative Learning Structures & Collaborative Learning Strategies.*” (Cuseo, 2002)
- * Note #2. For information on what distinguishes cooperative learning from traditional forms of small-group work, see the document titled: “*Cooperative Learning: Distinctive Features.*” (available from Joe Cuseo)
- ◆ *Group Projects*: Students work collaboratively out of class and deliver their work product in class (e.g., as team presentations or panel reports).
- ◆ *Team Journals*: Students respond to each other’s journal entries, either in print or on line.
- ◆ *Structured Interactions with Peer Leaders* (e.g., peer teaching assistants lead course discussions; inviting students with leadership roles on campus to class to serve as guest speakers or guest panelists).

- ◆ Emphasize the value of *peer learning*, and remind students that student *learning teams* are more than just *study groups* formed the night before an exam.

Many students think that peer collaboration simply means study groups that meet the night before major exams. However, effective student learning teams can collaborate regularly for other academic tasks besides test-review sessions, such as the following.

- > *Note-Taking Teams*

Students can team-up with other students *immediately after class has ended* to compare and share notes. Listening and note-taking are demanding tasks so it often happens that one student may have picked up something that others have missed and vice versa. Also, by teaming up immediately after class, students still have the opportunity to consult with the instructor about any missing or confusing information before she leaves the classroom.

- > *Reading Teams*

Students can team-up after completing reading assignments to compare their highlighting and margin notes. They can attempt to reach consensus about where the author's *major points* and what information in the chapter should be *studied* for exams.

- > *Library-Research Teams*

Studies show that many first-year students are unfamiliar with library research and sometimes experience “library anxiety.” Forming library research teams is an effective way students to develop a social-support group for reducing this fear and for locating and sharing sources of information. (Note: Point out to students that it is ethical for students to share the same information sources or references. This isn’t cheating or plagiarizing, as long as the final product each individual creates and submits represents his own work.)

- > *Team-Instructor Conferences*

Students can form teams to visit course instructors during office hours to seek additional assistance in preparing for exams and completing assignments. This is an effective team-learning strategy for a few reasons: (a) For a shy or unassertive student, it may be less intimidating to see an instructor on her “turf” or territory in the company of other students than it is to invade this foreign territory on his own. (b) The feedback received from the instructor is processed by more than one student, so the visiting team may pick up useful pieces of information that might have been missed, misinterpreted, or forgotten if processed individually and independently. (c) Students save the instructor time by allowing him to help a number of students simultaneously, rather than having him engage in “repeat performances” for individual students at different times. The team visit may also send a message to the instructor that these students are serious about learning and preparing themselves to learn, because they have taken the time to connect with their peers in advance of the office visit.

- > *Team Test-Results Review*

After receiving their test results, student teams can be formed to *review individual tests*

collectively, thereby helping individual teammates identify the sources of their mistakes and

to observe “model” answers that received maximum credit. Such post-test (or post-assignment) teaming may enable students to get a much clearer idea of what the instructor actually expects from them, and students can use this information as feedback to fine-tune and improve their performance on subsequent tests or assignments.

◆ *Facilitate the formation of peer learning teams.*

For example:

- > Offer to construct a “class directory” containing the phone numbers of students who are interested in working with other students, or in forming study groups outside of class. (To implement this strategy circulate a sheet of paper 2-3 weeks into the semester, asking for any students who are willing to be called by other students for help regarding course assignments or exam preparation.)
- > Ask students for their semester class schedule and place students who happen to be enrolled in the same course(s) in the same groups when forming discussion groups in class or when assigning group projects. This may increase the likelihood that these same students will get together out of class to work on the other courses they have in common, particularly if you explicitly encourage them to do so.
- > Provide out-of-class learning groups with some in-class time to work together. This can serve to “warm them up” to group work and “get the ball rolling,” while enabling you to observe their patterns of interaction and to provide them with constructive feedback.

TEACHING PRACTICES THAT “CONNECT” STUDENTS WITH KEY SUPPORT AGENTS *on CAMPUS* (Academic-Support Specialists, Student-Development Professionals, and College-Success Role Models)

The first-year seminar has the capacity to serve as a linchpin that connects new students with key campus-support agents, and promotes students’ social integration into the broader college community. These connections may be established by: (a) bringing support agents to students in *class*—as *guest speakers*, and (b) bringing students to support agents in their *office*—via *course assignments*. By means of these classroom and office visits, the first-year seminar can serve as an effective conduit for intrusively and proactively connecting new students to key support agents on campus who play a pivotal role in promoting their college success.

Examples:

- ◆ Students *construct questions* for support professionals who are invited to class as *guest speakers* or as members of a *presentation panel*.

To ensure that the process is interactive, have all students in class construct a set of interview questions prior to the visit and have them ask the questions during the visit—either

individually or in groups (e.g., a panel of students could collate and prioritize the interview questions and pose them to the guest speaker). Also, to encourage subsequent interaction between individual students and the guest speaker, have a sign-up sheet available to students so that they may immediately schedule an appointment.

- ◆ Students are given an assignment to *interview* a faculty member or support-service professional outside the classroom.

 - ◆ Assignments that *link or connect students* with key support agents and campus services:
 - *Academic advisors*—e.g., to develop a tentative, long-range educational plan
 - *Learning assistance* (learning resource) professionals—e.g., to assess learning styles
 - *Technology service/assistance* professionals
 - *Faculty* in students’ intended major
 - *Upper-division students* in the students’ intended major
 - *Graduate students* in the same or similar academic specialization as the student
 - Professionals in the same or similar career specialization as the student
 - Successful college alums in the same or similar career specialization as the student
 - *Career* counselors
 - *Personal* counselors
 - *Student Activities & Leadership Development* professionals
 - *Health service* professionals
 - *Campus minister*
 - *Service-learning* professionals—e.g., Office for Volunteer Programs
 - *Financial aid* counselors.
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TEACHING PRACTICES THAT PROMOTE THE STUDENT-COURSE (SUBJECT MATTER) CONNECTION

◆ **TEACHING PRACTICES** THAT PROMOTE ACTIVE STUDENT INVOLVEMENT DURING CLASS **LECTURES** (PRESENTATIONS)

The below-listed learning activities serve to involve students with the content being covered during instructor presentations, transforming the student’s role from passive listening and rote note-taking to active working and thinking with respect to lecture content. Said in another way, the following practices convert the “straight” lecture into a “working” lecture by *embedding active-learning* principles into the teaching process.

1. “**Pre-Lecture**” activities engaged in *before* a class presentation that are designed to *activate students’ pre-existing knowledge, feelings, and/or misconceptions* about the to-be-presented course topic.

Sample Pre-Lecture Activities:

- ◆ “*Whips*”: in rapid succession, students take turns verbalizing the first thing that comes to mind in response to the topic about to be covered.
- ◆ *Background Interest Probes*: students record in writing what they would like to know—or what questions they would like answered—about an upcoming topic.
- ◆ *Background Knowledge Probes*: students record in writing what they already know—or think they know—about an upcoming topic, and how they got to know it (i.e., the informational or experiential source of their knowledge).
- ◆ *Active Knowledge Sharing*: before beginning the presentation, students are provided with a *list of questions* relating to the subject matter to be covered (e.g., words to define, people to identify, pretest of facts or concepts). Students then pair up to answer the questions as best as they can, following which they dialogue with other pairs who may have answers to questions they were unable to answer.
- ◆ *Pre-Tests*: students are given a short, non-graded assessment of their knowledge or skills with respect to an upcoming unit of instruction.
- ◆ “*Flashbacks*”: students are asked how they think the upcoming topic relates to, or builds upon, the previous unit(s) of instruction.

2. “*Punctuated-Lecture*” activities that students engage in sometime in the middle of a lecture that are designed to prevent “attention drift” and prompt student involvement *during* the class presentation.

Sample Punctuated-Lecture Activities:

- ◆ *Instructor-Posed Questions* that Elicit Student Involvement and Instructor-Student Interaction
 - > *Divergent Questions*, which allow for a diverse set of acceptable responses—as opposed to “convergent” questions, for which there is one (and only one) correct answer.
 - > *Higher-Order Questions*, which request levels of student thinking higher than rote recall of factual information (e.g., questions that call for application or evaluation)
 - > *Focused Questions*, which are tied to or focused on a specific concept or issue—as opposed to the general (unfocused) query: “Does anybody have any questions or comments?”
 - > *Personalized Questions*, which “situate” students in a relevant, real-life context and asks them how they would respond in this situation.

- ◆ “*Quick Thinks*”: all students in class *write* a short (“quick”) response to a focused, instructor-posed question that is intended to promote a higher-level thinking skill. Potential Quick-Think *Questions & Intended Types of Higher-Level Thinking Skills*
 - > How would you *use or apply* _____ in real life? (Application)
 - > What is the *similarity/difference* between _____ and _____? (Comparative Analysis)
 - > What would *cause* _____ to take place? (Causal Analysis)
 - > What are the *implications* of _____? (Inductive Reasoning)
 - > What *general principle* does _____ illustrate? (Deductive Reasoning)
 - > *If* _____ happens to occur, *then* what might follow? (Hypothetical Reasoning)
 - > How does _____ *connect* with, or *relate* to _____? (Integration/Synthesis)
 - > What is an arguments *against* _____? (Refutation)
 - > What is an argument or source of evidence which *supports* _____? (Adduction)
 - > What are the *strengths/weaknesses* of _____? (Evaluation)
 - > What would be another/different example of _____? (Extrapolation/Decontextualization)

- ◆ Problem-Solving “Lecturettes”: short lecture presentations (e.g., 5-10 minutes) that introduce students to a series of problems, which alternate successively with comparable periods of class discussion about possible solutions.

- ◆ *Cooperative Note-Taking Pairs*: At a designated point *during* the class presentation, students pair up and *ask each other questions* such as: “What have you got in your notes thus far?” or, “What are the most important points that have been presented?” Each member of the pair is instructed to take something from the other’s notes to include in his own.

- ◆ *Scripted Cooperation*: At a key point *during* the lecture, students pair-up and one member assumes the role of *summarizer*—who attempts to summarize the information presented without looking at his notes, while the other assumes the role of *listener*—who provides feedback about its accuracy and completeness. Then partners *elaborate* on the information by personalizing it, relating it to previously learned information, or creating mnemonic devices to remember it.

3. Post-Lecture activities designed to actively involve students in *retrospection* (*reflective review*) and *consolidation* (“locking in”) of information *after* instructional delivery.

Sample Post-Lecture Activities:

- ◆ *Minute Paper*: short (one minute or less), writing activity engaged in after completion of a learning experience, which is designed to encourage students to reflect on the meaning or personal significance of the experience.

Potential Minute-Paper *Questions*:

- > What do you think was the major *purpose or objective* of today's presentation?
- > What do you think was the most *important* point or *central* concept communicated in today's presentation?
- > Without looking at your highlighting or notes, what *stands out in your mind* or what do you *recall most vividly* about today's class?
- > Looking back at your notes, what would you say was the *most interesting* idea or *most useful* strategy discussed in today's class?
- > What was the most *enlightening example* or most *powerful image* you experienced in today's class?
- > What was the most *convincing argument* (or counterargument) that you heard in today's class?
- > During today's class, what idea(s) struck you as things you could or should immediately *put into practice*?
- > Have you *personally experienced* any of the events that were discussed in today's class?
- > Did you see any *connections* between what was discussed in today's class and what is being covered in any of your *other course(s)*?
- > What was the most *surprising* and/or *unexpected* idea expressed in this class session?
- > What do you think was the most *puzzling, confusing, or disturbing* idea that surfaced in today's class?
- > What *helped* and/or *hindered* your understanding of today's presentation?
- > What *questions remain unanswered* about the content of covered in today's class?

Advantages of the Minute Paper:

1. Promotes *Reflection, Consolidation, & Closure*
2. Provides a "*Conceptual Bridge*" between Classes
3. Promotes *Class Attendance & Participation*
4. Provides *Feedback* to the Instructor & Learner
5. Can Function as an Ongoing *Learning Log* or *Learning Journal*.
6. Enhances *Instructor-Student Rapport*.

- ◆ *Closure Note-Taking Pairs*: At the *conclusion* of a lecture, one partner *summarizes* her notes for the other—who, in turn, *corrects* any mistakes and *adds* any missing information. Each member must take something from his partner's notes and include it in his own.
- ◆ *Pair Review*: At the *end* of a lecture, pairs of students are presented with a list of topics that have been covered and form pairs whose task is to *recall* as many things as they can remember about each topic.

References

Cuseo, J. B. (2002). *Igniting student involvement, peer interaction, and teamwork: A taxonomy of specific cooperative learning structures and collaborative learning strategies*. Stillwater, OK: New Forums

Press.

◆ **REALITY-BASED, PROBLEM-CENTERED LEARNING TASKS**

Learning tasks that center on “real” (life-like) problems or scenarios, which actively involve students in decision-making with respect to their solution or resolution.

Learning tasks that are most conducive to active involvement are those that contain at least some degree of *ambiguity or uncertainty*, allowing for *divergent thinking and diverse perspectives*. Such learning tasks include (a) *problems* with a variety of possible solutions, (b) *issues or dilemmas* that are not easily resolved, and (c) *decisions* to be made among a number of equally appealing alternatives. Listed below is a series of problem-centered learning tasks that actively engage students in this fashion, and which may be experienced individually or collaboratively.

- 1. Cases (Case Method):** Stories, actual events, or fictitious events approximating reality that require decision-making and encourage critical thinking with respect to an ambiguous situation or problem, for which there is no single correct answer or solution. For example, college-adjustment case based on and constructed from the instructor’s personal experiences with first-year students—such as submitting a paper after its due date, but asking the instructor for it to be accepted because of extenuating circumstances. (Cases may also be readily drawn from articles in student and daily newspapers, or they may be suggested by students in class.)
- 2. Critical Incidents:** Short (5-10 line) account of an open-ended problem that is typically less detailed than a case study and involves fewer characters or points of view (e.g., racial incident reported in national or local newspaper serves as focal point for class discussion).
- 3. Role Plays:** Dramatic enactments of scenarios involving characters whose behaviors and relationships represent an issue or dilemma with which the student audience can identify. (For example, dramatizations could include roommate conflicts, peer pressure at a college party, student behavior in the classroom [active, passive, and “rude”], or student-faculty interaction during an office visit.)
- 4. Scripts:** Scenarios in which the characters’ parts are read, rather than enacted dramatically or theatrically. (For example, students complete an unfinished script by responding as if they were one of the characters in the scripted scenario.)
- 5. Simulations:** Learning tasks that immerse students in a physical or social environment that substitute for, and approximates the reality of an actual life experience. (For example, *BaFa’-BaFa’* is an intercultural simulation, whereby students assume membership in either the Alpha or Beta culture [each with its own set of cultural values, expectations, customs and communication styles], and members of each “culture” visit, observe, and interact with the other “foreign” culture, thereby simulating the experience of what it’s like to function effectively in a culture that differs radically from their own.)

6. **Games:** Highly engaging learning formats that involve competitive rules that are comparable to those used in actual games. (For example, first-year seminar students learn factual information via formats similar to those used in TV game shows—such as “Jeopardy” or “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire,” or board games—such as “Trivial Pursuits” or “Scrupples.” (Teams may be created to add create inter-group competition and intra-group collaboration.)
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◆ **ATTENTION-GRABBING *FOCUS POINTS* and INVOLVEMENT-INDUCING *PROMPTS***

Evocative stimuli that *capture attention*, *stimulate interest*, and *elicit involvement*, which may be used at the *start* of class or a new unit of instruction to create a sense of *positive anticipation*, i.e., an “anticipatory set” that stimulates students’ curiosity and positive expectation toward the upcoming material.

Examples:

- ◆ Classic *quotes* (e.g., from a famous figure)
 - ◆ Provocative *passages* (e.g., paragraph, short poem)
 - ◆ Poignant *pictures/images* (e.g., successful people)
 - ◆ Riveting *video vignettes*.
 - ◆ Intriguing *artifacts* (e.g., relevant historical, cultural, or biological object—such as a model of the human brain when discussing learning strategies)
 - ◆ Concept-relevant *cartoons* (e.g., depicting an element of college life under discussion).
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◆ ***OUT-OF-CLASS ASSIGNMENTS* THAT PROMOTE STUDENTS’ ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT WITH THE SUBJECT MATTER**

1. **“*WRITING TO READ*” ASSIGNMENTS: Promoting *active reading* by having students engage in *writing*—in response what they read.**

Examples:

- ◆ “Pre-Reading” Writing: Students survey what they are about to read and record (in writing) their prior knowledge, feelings, and/or attitudes about the to-be-read material.
- ◆ “Punctuated Reading Exercises”: after students read each major section or subsection

of a textbook chapter, they generate a short written reaction or summary before proceeding to the next section.

- ◆ “Prompted Reading Journals”: Students write responses to instructor-posed prompts or cues about the assigned reading (e.g., “The examples cited in the reading which I can most relate to are . . .”).
- ◆ “Focused Dialectical Notes” (Cross and Angelo, 1988): Students engage in a dialogue with the text by recording notes on the left half of divided notepaper, and then use the right half to record their reactions to the notes (e.g., their agreements, disagreements, or questions with respect to the information read).
- ◆ “Word Journals”: Students record a single word that best summarizes an assigned reading, and then follow-up with a paragraph explaining why that word was chosen.
- ◆ “Synthesis Sheets”: Students construct written summaries, paraphrased notes, or concept maps that encapsulate the most important points in assigned reading.
- ◆ “Tip Sheets”: Students construct a list of practical implications or applications derived from assigned reading.

2. “READING TO *DISCUSS*” ASSIGNMENTS: Promoting *active reading* by having students engage in *oral discussion* with respect to reading assignments.

Examples:

- ◆ “Discussion-Question Construction” Reading: Students construct several questions relating to the assigned reading and require them to bring these questions to class for discussion. (For example, individual students record their questions on the board at the start of the period, the class categorizes them, and then discusses them either as a whole group or in a small-group format.)
- ◆ “Cooperative Reading”: Students collaborate in pairs or small groups to discuss and complete an exercise with respect to the reading (e.g., students read create summaries individually and then team-up to construct a composite summary, which they share with the rest of the class).
- ◆ “Reading-Based Group Project Presentations”: Students collaborate outside of class to complete assigned reading, and make a team presentation in class about its implications or applications.

3. ASSIGNMENTS THAT ENGAGE STUDENTS IN SELF-ASSESSMENT & PROMOTE SELF-AWARENESS

Self-assessment is a form of active learning, because it *engages* the learner is an act of self-
reflection and self-examination.

◆ **Self-Assessment Instruments/Inventories**

Examples:

- *Learning-style* instruments (e.g., LASSI)
- *Vocational-interest* inventories (e.g., CHOICES)
- *Personality* profiles (e.g., MBTI)
- *Time-management* assessments (e.g., procrastination tendencies)
- *Wellness/Life-Style* questionnaires (e.g., eating and exercise habits).
- *Developmental portfolio* containing results of, and reflections on, all self-assessments completed during the course.

◆ **Self-Responsibility/Character-Development Assignments**

Examples:

- Self-assessment of *academic effort and progress* at *midterm*
- Examining *present* behavior, *past* influences are contributing to *present* behavior, and intended *future* behavior (e.g., intended behavioral changes or improvements)
- Examining *consistencies/discrepancies* between *intentions & actions*
- Unearthing *blocks/barriers/excuses* for failing to act on intentions.

◆ **Writing-To-Learn Assignments:** *short* writing assignments designed to stimulate personal *reflection* and *deep thinking/learning*.

Examples:

- *Journals:* written reflections on personal experiences over an extended period of time, which provide the writer with a *chronological record of thoughts and feelings* that can be reviewed to detect patterns of continuity or change. Journals may take on different forms, such as the following: (a) “Free” Journals—give students complete freedom to write about any personal issue they would like; (b) “Prompted” Journals—ask students to write in response to a specific, instructor-posed prompt (e.g., “My first impression of college is . . .”). (c) “Team” Journals—ask students to write personal entries and respond to entries written by 3-4 classmates who comprise their learning team.
- *Freewriting:* *quickly recorded* thoughts, feelings, or free associations on a topic or subject which are generated with *little regard for mechanics* (e.g., feelings or anxieties about college).
- *Learning Logs:* extended reflective-writing assignments in which students record their *personal learning experiences over an extended period of time*, such as (a) what they think they’re learning in a course, (b) how they are learning it, or (c) their feelings about the learning process and their personal progress.

- *Microthemes*: brief, focused writing assignments (short enough to fit on a 5X8 card), which require students to take a *personal position* or offer a *personal interpretation* with respect to a debatable issue or controversial topic (For example, “thesis-support” microthemes, in which students choose from one of two opposing positions or theses and write a microtheme defending that position.)

4. EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING ASSIGNMENTS

Students learn *actively and directly* (not passively and vicariously) through *first-hand* (“hands on”) experience and self-discovery.

Examples:

- ◆ At the start of a class session, students individually try to recall as much as they can from last class, after which they team-up in small groups and pool information they recalled on an individual basis. The resulting discrepancy between the group’s collective memory and the memory of single individuals, allows students to discover first-hand the power of peer collaboration and teamwork.
- ◆ Students become “participant observers” and conduct observational “field studies” of student behavior on campus (e.g., in student residences, classrooms, or the library).
- ◆ Students conduct “historical research” on the college or university by interviewing alumni and searching campus archives for information on the institution’s origin and development.

5. IMMEDIATE-APPLICATION ASSIGNMENTS

Students *immediately implement or concurrently apply* success strategies learned in the seminar *during their first semester* of college life.

Examples:

- ◆ Implementing a *time-management plan* for the first term. (For example, students construct a semester schedule that includes due dates for tests/assignments in all courses and designated times for study, recreation, work, etc.).
- ◆ Applying *effective learning strategies to current courses*. (For example, students keep a “learning log” of academic-success strategies discussed in the seminar that they are presently attempting to apply to other first-semester courses).

6. FUTURE-PLANNING ASSIGNMENTS: Students actively design and construct *tentative long-range plans* that *connect* their *present* college experience with their future

educational and life goals.

◆ **Long-Range *Educational Planning* Assignments:**

Examples:

- *General-Education* plan
- *Academic-Major* plan
- *Post-Graduate* educational plan.

◆ **Career-Planning Assignments:**

Examples:

- Identifying ideal *career positions*
- Constructing an *ideal resume*
- Initiating a *portfolio*—collection of materials that illustrate and document student competencies, accomplishments, &/or growth over time (e.g., best written work, artistic products, research projects, letters of commendation or recommendation, academic or co-curricular awards, and certificates of achievement).

◆ **Life-Planning Assignments:** Plans that move beyond educational and vocational goals to include *personal growth* and *holistic (whole-person) development* and embrace social, emotional, ethical, physical, and/or spiritual dimensions of the self.

THE *FIRST DAY & WEEK OF CLASS:* Instructional Strategies

The beginning stage of a course includes the all-important first day and first week of class. During this formative period, it may be useful to view the process of building class community as the first "topic" that needs to be addressed in class. Allowing students early opportunity to interact with each other and with the instructor, is a fundamental or foundational experience that should be "covered" before any other topic is introduced. Not only does such early interpersonal bonding enhance student retention by promoting social integration, it may also address a primary need of new students at the very beginning of their first semester--a time at which research indicates that freshmen are most concerned about "fitting in" and establishing social ties (Simpson, Baker & Mellinger, 1980; Brower, 1997). Thus, it may be helpful to view the needs of first-semester freshmen in terms of Abraham Maslow's classic "need hierarchy" model, in which human needs for social acceptance and self-esteem are more basic and must be met before higher needs for personal growth and self-actualization can be realized (Maslow, 1954).

The first week of class may also be the time to provide students with a *preview* of some of the more exciting and interesting issues to be covered in the course. In particular, use the first day of class to create a "positive first impression" of the course, which can establish motivational momentum and a foundation of enthusiasm upon which the course can build or "take off." This practice should differentiate the inauguration of the course from many other college courses in which professors often use the first day of class to deliver a drab review of the syllabus that often includes a "laundry list" of course requirements and policies--which is enough to induce "syllabus anxiety" in some students. Adding insult to injury, this cursory review is sometimes followed by early class dismissal, which sends students the tacit message that the first day of class is not important (or, worse yet, that class time is not important and can be readily sacrificed).

Instructors who conduct the first day of class in the foregoing fashion may underestimate the important influence of the first class in shaping students' initial impression of the course. The first impression can be an influential force that has long-lasting impact, and if it is not a positive one, as the old saying goes, "you never get a second chance to make a first impression." This suggests that the first class should be one that is deliberately designed to generate student interest and student involvement. As Friday (1989) illustrates, "Opening the first session with a lecture on course goals delivered to students seated in rows is likely to establish the expectation that the teacher is in charge of doing the work and that the students are responsible for observing" (p. 59). Similarly, Erickson and Strommer argue that students come to the first class with a "hidden agenda" which includes determining "what the professor is like, who the other students are, how instructors and students will behave, and what climate will prevail. In addition to distributing the syllabus, then, our agenda for the first class would include . . . getting students to talk [and] to be actively involved. If they sit passively during the first day, they will do the same in the next" (1991, 87).

Another timely practice that could be introduced during the first week of class is to provide students with an *overview* of the overarching topics and a preview of key strategies for succeeding in the course. An effective overview has the *cognitive* advantage of giving students a sense of the "big picture" (total context), as well as providing them with an "advance organizer" that can enhance the later learning of specific information related to it (Ausubel, 1978). Also, taking some time during the first week of class to provide a preview of course-success strategies

can have *affective* advantages for students, serving to increase their awareness of adjustments they may need to make during the course, so that they are better anticipated and implemented more proactively (Whitman, Spendlove, & Clark, 1984). Such anticipatory discussion of potential stressors has been found to function like a "stress inoculation," serving to strengthen an individual's coping response to the stressor when it is subsequently experienced (Meichenbaum, 1985).

Lastly, use the first week of class to make an intentional effort to *learn your students' names*. No one more poignantly captures the significance of remembering an individual's name than does Dale Carnegie in, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*: "We should be aware of the *magic* contained in a name and realize that this single item is wholly and completely owned by the person with whom we are dealing and nobody else. Remember that a person's name is to that person the sweetest and most important sound in any language" (1936, p. 83).

College research indicates that "addressing students by name" is a classroom teaching behavior that correlates positively and significantly with students' overall evaluation of the instructor (Murray, 1985). In contrast, research on "uncomfortable courses" (i.e., courses most likely to cause "classroom communication apprehension" among students) reveals that such courses are more likely to be taught by instructors who are perceived by their students as being unfriendly and who did not address students by their first name (Bowers, 1986).

It is my personal experience that learning the names of students as quickly as possible is the most effective way to create a positive first impression among students and establish early rapport with your class, thereby laying the foundation for a classroom environment in which students feel comfortable interacting with the instructor and becoming actively involved in the course.

Listed below is my "top ten" list of strategies for the effective and expeditious learning of student names.

1. Ask the office of Students Services or Student Affairs if you could review *identification photos* of students in your class.

This could be done before the course begins, or whenever class rosters are first available from the registrar. Learning to associate or pair faces and names is expedited if the names are learned prior to making associations with their respective faces. Also, you can use student-identification photos to selectively review the names and faces of particular students who you are having difficulty remembering.

2. Make *short-hand comments* next to student names *when calling roll on the first day of class* (e.g., record memory-triggering comments referring to the student's distinctive physical characteristics or seating location).

Remaining after class for a few minutes to review these comments made by each student's name is an effective memory-enhancement practice because it capitalizes on the fact that you may still have visual memory for students' facial features and for the spatial (seating) position they occupied in class. Your visual-spatial memory can be improved further if you request some information from students on the first day (e.g., personal information cards) and collect their responses *in the same order in which they are seating* in class. Moreover, this quick post-class review tends to combat the

“forgetting curve” at a time when most memory loss tends to occur—during the first 20-30 minutes after new information has been learned.

3. On the first or second day of class, consider using short *ice-breaker* activities designed to help students and the instructor to get to know each other.

For example, “paired interviews” may be used in which two students interview each other and then report the other's autobiographical information to the whole class.

Another effective icebreaker is the “name game” strategy whereby students sit in a circle or horseshoe arrangement and say their name preceded by an adjective that begins with the first letter of their name and describes something about their personality (e.g., “jittery Joe” or “gregarious Gertrude”); or, students may say their names accompanied by some nonverbal behavior that reflects their personality. After each student introduces himself, ask the next student to recall the name of the previous student before introducing herself.

4. On the first day of class, take a *photograph* of the class and have individual students sign their names by (or on) their respective faces. Use this as a record to review or rehearse student names until you have mastered them.
5. On the first day of class, have individual students introduce themselves, and have this class session *videotaped* so you may review or rehearse students' names and faces outside of class time.
6. During the first week of class, have students submit to you a *photocopy* of the picture on their student identification card or driver's license and use these pictures to help you associate names with faces.
7. *Rehearse* student names during periods of “dead time” (e.g., as students enter class and take their seats, or as you circulate among students during small-group discussions and exams).
Early in the term, make an attempt to come to class early and to remain after class while students file out. This will provide you with opportunities to rehearse names, one by one, as students enter and leave the classroom.
8. Consider assigning some short *reaction papers* or *minute papers* at the end of class during the first weeks of the term.
This practice will enable you to learn the names of students as they come up (one by one) to turn in their papers at the end of class, as well at the beginning of the following class session when students come up individually to the front of class to pick up their papers.
9. Schedule *brief, out-of-class conferences* with individual students during the first few weeks of class so you can meet them one at a time.

This should enhance your ability to learn and remember their names because it allows for “distributed” practice, i.e., learning small amounts of information in a series of short separate sessions. For instance, it is easier to associate 21 faces with 21 names if they are learned three per day on seven different days, rather than learning all 21 of them on one day.

10. *Continually refer to students by name* after initially learning their names (e.g., always address them by name when you respond to them in class or when you see them on campus).

This practice serves not only to reinforce your memory of the student's name, it also repeatedly signals to the student that you know him as a person and are responding to him as a unique individual.

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APPENDIX A

STRATEGIES FOR LEARNING & REMEMBERING STUDENT NAMES

Learning the names of students as quickly as possible is an effective way to create a positive first impression among students and establish early rapport with your class, thereby laying the foundation for a classroom environment in which students feel comfortable interacting with the instructor and becoming actively involved in the course.

Listed below is a “top ten” list of strategies for the effective and expeditious learning of student names.

1. Check your computer system to see if you can access the photos of students who are registered for your class, or ask the office of Students Services or Student Affairs if you could review *identification photos* of students in your class.

This could be done before the course begins, or whenever class rosters are first available from the registrar. Learning to associate or pair faces and names is expedited if the names are learned prior to making associations with their respective faces. Also, you can use student-identification photos to selectively review the names and faces of particular students who you are having difficulty remembering.

2. Make *short-hand comments* next to student names *when calling roll on the first day of class* (e.g., record memory-triggering comments referring to the student's distinctive physical characteristics or seating location).

Remaining after class for a few minutes to review these comments made by each student's name is an effective memory-enhancement practice because it capitalizes on the fact that you may still have visual memory for students' facial features and for the spatial (seating) position they occupied in class. Your visual-spatial memory can be improved further if you request some information from students on the first day (e.g., personal information cards) and collect their responses *in the same order in which they are seating* in class. Moreover, this quick post-class review tends to combat the “forgetting curve” at a time when most memory loss tends to occur—during the first 20-30 minutes after new information has been learned.

3. On the first or second day of class, consider using short *community-building* exercise designed to help students and the instructor to get to know each other.

The “student information sheet” may be used for this purpose. Your memory for student names can be strengthened significantly if you read student responses on their information sheets and ask each student a short question about something she or he wrote down. A short verbal exchange can promote “episodic” memory that can help you remember the student's face and name because they become associated with this interpersonal “episode.” Also, do not ignore the student's last name when trying to learn their first name. Often students' last names are more distinctive than their first names; for example, you may have three students with

the same first name (e.g., Jennifer) but each of them will have distinctive last names. It is easier to retrieve memory for distinctive info than routine or redundant info (Barsalou, 1988; Robinson, 1992). Thus, if you learn the student's more distinctive last name, you may then be able to associate the first name with it. When you later try to remember the student's full name,

the last name will be easier to retrieve because it's more distinctive, and once you've retrieved it, the associated first name should also come to mind.

The "classmate scavenger hunt" may be used to introduce students to each other. Or, "paired interviews" may be employed, in which two students interview each other and then report the other's autobiographical information to the whole class. Another effective community builder is the "name game" strategy whereby students sit in a circle or horseshoe arrangement and say their name preceded by an adjective that begins with the first letter of their

name and describes something about their personality (e.g., "jittery Joe" or "gregarious Gertrude"); or, students may say their names accompanied by some nonverbal behavior that reflects their personality. After each student introduces himself, ask the next student to recall the name of the previous student before introducing herself.

4. On the first day of class, take a *photograph* of the class and have individual students sign their names by (or on) their respective faces. Use this as a record to review or rehearse student names until you have mastered them.
5. On the first day of class, have individual students introduce themselves, and have this class session *videotaped* so you may review or rehearse students' names and faces outside of class time.
6. During the first week of class, have students submit to you a *photocopy* of the picture on their student identification card or driver's license and use these pictures to help you associate names with faces.
7. *Rehearse* student names during periods of "dead time" (e.g., as students enter class and take their seats, or as you circulate among students during small-group discussions and exams).

Early in the term, make an attempt to come to class early and to remain after class while students file out. This will provide you with opportunities to rehearse names, one by one, as students enter and leave the classroom.

8. Consider assigning some short *reaction papers* or *minute papers* at the end of class during the first weeks of the term.

This practice will enable you to learn the names of students as they come up (one by one) to turn in their papers at the end of class, as well at the beginning of the following class session when students come up individually to the front of class to pick up their papers.

9. Schedule *brief, out-of-class conferences* with individual students during the first few weeks of class so you can meet them one at a time.

This should enhance your ability to learn and remember their names because it allows for “distributed” practice, i.e., learning small amounts of information in a series of short separate sessions. For instance, it is easier to associate 21 faces with 21 names if they are learned three per day on seven different days, rather than learning all 21 of them on one day.

10. *Continually refer to students by name* after initially learning their names (e.g., always address them by name when you respond to them in class or when you see them on campus).

This practice serves not only to reinforce your memory of student names, it also repeatedly signals to students that you know them as persons and are responding to him as unique individuals.

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APPENDIX B

THE STUDENT INFORMATION SHEET: A Strategy for Promoting Personal Reflection and Validation

Joe Cuseo

My first and foremost goal in every class is to establish rapport with my students. Similar to Maslow's need-hierarchy model of human motivation, I operate under the assumption that meeting students' need for acceptance and validation is a precondition that provides the social-emotional foundation for learning and growth. It has been my experience that students begin to care more about learning and become more committed to the learning process when they sense that their instructor cares about them.

Probably my most successful and potentially replicable instructional strategy for gaining and maintaining instructor-student rapport is what I call the "Student Information Sheet." The sheet contains questions for students to answer; the questions are divided into six general areas: (1) personal background, (2) future plans, (3) personal abilities, achievements, and distinctive qualities, (4) personal interests, (5) personal values, and (6) course expectations, expectations and interests. (See Appendix A at the end of this article for a specific list of questions relating to each of these six categories.)

On the first day of class, I distribute the course syllabus, but do not spend class time systematically reviewing it. Instead, I tell students that their first assignment is to read the syllabus for the next class session, because I want my first experience with them to focus on people, not paper. I tell them that we're going to take some time to learn about each other before we attempt to learn the subject matter, then I project a transparency that contains the questions related to the aforementioned six areas. I reveal one question at a time, and have students record their answers to each question on a sheet of paper; at the same time, I write my answers on the board to the same questions (except for those questions that are student-specific, such as class standing). By answering the questions myself, I show students that I trust them well enough to reveal something personal about myself, which in turn, seems to make them feel more comfortable about revealing more of themselves to me. Also, my answering the questions with them serves to validate the exercise, suggesting that it's worthy of my time and effort as well.

This exercise typically takes about one minute per question, i.e., 40 questions takes approximately 40 minutes. I typically use no more than 30 of the questions, because I want to reserve some class time to collect the information sheets and review students' names. I like to keep the process moving fairly quickly by advising students that they can use single words and phrases to answer the questions (as I do on the board). Also, short and fairly quick responses can often capture students' true thoughts or feelings in response to the question (akin to free association), as opposed to calculated, socially acceptable responses.

After the exercise is completed, I collect each student's information sheet and use it in the following ways to promote rapport with the class throughout the term.

1. On the first day of class, after I've collected all the information sheets, I call-out the names of individual students, asking them to raise their hand when their name is called so I can associate their *name and face*. As I call their names out, I very rapidly jot down a quick word or abbreviated phrase next to the student's name for later review (e.g., something about a distinctive physical feature or seating spot that can help me remember the student).
2. Before the next class meeting, I read all student responses to the questions and highlight one from each student's sheet that is thought provoking or stimulating. I come to the second class session with something highlighted on each student's sheet, and I start class by calling out each student's name and asking the student for a brief elaboration on the item I've highlighted (e.g., When did you move from New York to California? When you worked with handicapped children, what type of assistance did you provide?) This shows each student that I've taken to time to read their information sheets and am taking an *individual interest* in each one of them. The short verbal interchange I have with each student also helps me immensely in learning their names, because it allows more eye-contact time than that which occurs during a simple roll call, and it provides a distinctive event or "episode" to which I can relate

(associate) their face and name.

3. Throughout the term, I use the information sheet to *actively involve* individual students in the course. I identify topical interests that individual students mentioned on their information sheets during the first day of class, record the student's name on a post-it sticker, and then stick it onto my class notes—next to the topic or subtopic which the student had expressed an interest. When that particular topic is covered later in the semester, I introduce it by mentioning the name of the student who had expressed interest in that topic on the first day of class. It has been my experience that students perk-up when I mention their name in association with their preferred topic, and they are often amazed by my apparent ability to remember the interests they expressed on the very first day of class at points later on in the semester. Students rarely ask how I managed to remember their personal interests, so they remain unaware of my “crib sheet” strategy. Consequently, they tend to conclude that I have extraordinary social memory and social sensitivity (which is fine with me).

I also use the student information sheet for the following purposes.

4. To make final decisions about what particular *topics* to cover in the course.

I will use student interests expressed on the information sheet to help select course topics and subtopics. I decide on a set of core concepts or topics to be covered in the course and use information gleaned from students' sheets to decide on what remaining “supplemental” topics to cover. I explicitly inform the class I've done this, which gives them a sense of input into and ownership of the course that may serve to enhance their intrinsic motivation.

5. To make personal connections with *non-participative* or “*detached*” students.

For example, before class, I may strike-up a conversation with a shy student about something from her information sheet. Or, as students leave the classroom at the end of class, I typically stand by the door as they depart. When a quiet or non-participative student is leaving, I'll quickly ask that student something relating to his information sheet.

6. To connect the course with *other courses* that students are taking in the same term.

One question on the information sheet asks students for their current class schedule. I make note of other courses that students are taking and attempt to relate the course to other courses that students are taking. For instance, when I'm covering mnemonic devices in freshman seminar, I will use examples for improving memory that apply to content they may be learning in other classes.

7. To intentionally form *small groups* or *learning teams*.

For example, I may create homogeneous groups consisting of students with the same career interests, or heterogeneous teams comprised of students from different geographical areas).

8. To *personalize written feedback* that I provide students during the term.

For example, if a student initially expressed an interest in joining a student club or finding an on-campus job, I'll ask about that by writing a “P.S.” at the end of the feedback I'm providing on a journal entry or exam.

9. To prepare for and personalize students' scheduled *office visits*.

I will look over the information sheet of a student prior to an office visit and refer to something mentioned on the sheet during the office visit.

10. To personalize and enliven the process of *returning student assignments* in class.

Periodically, before a class session when I'll be returning student assignments, I look over the information sheets just before going to class and when returning their assignments in class, instead of calling their names, I'll call out something from their information sheet. For example, I might say: “Will a future occupational therapist from Maryland please come up and pick-up your assignment?” (This demonstrates to students at later points in the term that I still know them well.)

11. To *showcase* students' *articulate* comments and *insightful* ideas.

I will look for comments and ideas shared by students on their information sheet that may relate to a course topic and display them on a transparency when we get to that particular topic in class. For example, there is a question on the information sheet that asks students for their favorite quote. One student wrote: “When you point your finger at someone else, there are three fingers pointing back at you.” This succinct saying artfully captured the gist of projection—a defense mechanism that I was going to cover in class. When we got to that defense mechanism, I created an overhead transparency that contained the student’s quote along with her name and used it to introduce the concept of projection. (This practice serves to validate students’ ideas, plus I’ve found that they really seem to get a charge out of being quoted; perhaps it makes them feel like a famous person.)

12. To personalize *test questions* that I use on *exams*.

I use the information sheets to construct test questions relating to individual students’ interests. For instance, in a freshman seminar test covering the topic of major/career choice, I include student names on questions that relate to their particular major or career interest (e.g., “Jennifer P. is interested in both Art and Business, so she decides to major in Art and minor in Business. Approximately how many courses in Business will she need to complete a minor in this field?”).

Conclusion

It’s been my experience that when students are aware you care about them, they care more about you and what you’re trying to teach them. They also seem to become more intrinsically motivated, more actively involved in the learning process, more willing to take intellectual risks, and tend to respond more positively (less defensively) to instructional feedback. The student information sheet has been my single most effective method for demonstrating to students that I care about them as individuals. It has proven to be well worth the “sacrifice” of lost content coverage on the first day of class because it creates a much more favorable first impression of the course, and because it has the versatility to be used in multiple ways—throughout the term—to connect students with the course material, with the course instructor, and with their classmates.

Appendix C

STUDENT INFORMATION-SHEET QUESTIONS

PERSONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

1. Your *name* (as you prefer to be called)?
2. *Phone number/E-Mail number* (optional)?
3. Place of *birth*? Places *lived*? Presently living on campus (where) or commuting (from where)?
4. What is your *class schedule* for this term? (*Course titles and times*)?
5. How many *college credits* have you *completed*? (Freshman, sophomore, junior, senior?)
6. Why did you choose *this college*? (What brought you here?)
7. Have any of your *friends* or family *attended* this college?
8. Have you attended any *other colleges*? (If yes, where and when?)
9. What *jobs* or *volunteer* experiences have you had?
10. Will you be working or volunteering *this term*? If so, how many *hours per week*? *On or off campus*?
11. Will you have *family responsibilities* this term?
12. Has anyone in your *immediate family* (parents or siblings) *graduated from college*?

FUTURE PLANS:

13. Intended *major* (already decided or being considered)? *How sure* are you about this choice? (*What lead you to this choice*?)
14. What are your *plans* (definite or tentative) after *graduating* from this college?
15. Intended *career*? (If already decided or being considered) *How sure* are you about this choice? *What lead you to this choice*?

PERSONAL ABILITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS, & DISTINCTIVE QUALITIES:

16. What are you really *good* at? What comes *easily* or *naturally* to you?
17. What would you say are your most developed *skills* or *talents*?
18. How do you think you *learn best*?
19. What would you say has been your greatest *accomplishment, achievement, or success story* in life thus far?
20. What *three words* do you think *best* describe you?
21. What would your *best friend(s)* say is your *most likable quality*?
22. What would you say are your personal *strengths* right now? What personal areas you would like to *work on or improve*?

PERSONAL INTERESTS:

23. What sorts of things do you *look forward to*, and get *excited* about?
24. What sorts of things *capture and hold* your *interest*?
25. What would you say have been your *most enjoyable & least enjoyable* learning experiences?
26. What are your *hobbies*? *Fun* activities?
22. How do you *relax and unwind*?
27. If you had a day, week, or year to *go anywhere* you wanted and *do anything* you liked, *where* would you go and *what* would you do?
28. What do you like to *read*?
29. When you open a *newspaper*, what *section* of it do you turn to *first*?
30. What's your favorite *movie and/or TV program* (if any)?
31. What's your favorite *music* or *musical artist(s)*?
32. Is there anyone dead or alive, real or imaginary, whom you've never met but would like to *meet* and have a *conversation* with? (Why?)

PERSONAL VALUES:

33. What's very *important* to you?"(What *matters* to you the most?)(What is something you really *care* about?)
34. When you have *free time*, what do you usually find yourself doing?
35. When you have extra spending *money*, what do you usually spend it on?
36. Is there a *motto, quote, song, symbol, or bumper sticker* that represents something you stand for or believe in?
37. If there is one thing in this world that you'd like to *change*, what would it be?)
38. How would you define *success*? (What does "*being successful*" mean to you?)
39. Do you tend to *daydream* about anything in particular?
40. Do you have any *heroes*? Is there anyone you *admire, look up to, or feel* has *set an example worth following*? (Why?)
41. Who or what would you say has had the *greatest influence on your life*? (In what way?)
42. If there is anything in your life that you would like to *change or do over again*, what would it be? Why?
43. What would you like to be said about you in your *obituary* or at your *eulogy*?

COURSE EXPECTATIONS, ATTITUDES, & INTERESTS:

44. *Why* are you taking this course?
45. When you hear "[title of the course]" what's the *first thing* that comes to your mind?
46. What information or topics do you *think* will be covered in this course?
47. Have you had any other *courses or learning experiences* in this subject area?
48. Do you have any course *expectations or goals*? Anything that you *hope* will be *covered or discussed* in this class?
49. Right now, how do you *feel* about taking this course—positive, negative, neutral? (Why?)
50. Is there *anything else* about the *course*, or about *yourself*, that I haven't asked, but you think would be interesting or useful for me to know?

Appendix D

The “Classmate Scavenger Hunt”: A Strategy For Promoting Peer Connections & Creating Class Community

Joe Cuseo

After 25 years of college teaching, I think that I have learned two important things. One is that the first few class sessions represent a critical, formative period that strongly shapes students’ initial impressions and subsequent perceptions of the course. The other is that there are three critical “connections” that should be made with students at the outset of a course, namely: the student-*instructor* connection, the student-*course* (subject matter) connection, and the student-*student* (peer) connection.

I attempt to make the student-instructor connection by using the “student information sheet” (as described in a previous article). I attempt to make the student-course (subject matter) connection by taking about 15 minutes of time during my review of the course syllabus to provide students with a “sneak preview” that highlights some of the more interesting and exciting course topics or issues that will be discussed during the term, and by seeking students’ written input on topics that interest them. Lastly, I attempt to promote the student-student (peer) connection by a class-community building or peer bonding exercise that I call, “The Classroom Scavenger Hunt.”

This classroom exercise is designed to introduce students to each other, reduce students’ social anxiety, and build a sense of group trust and class cohesiveness. Step-by-step instructions for this exercise are provided in Appendix A.

In short, the Classmate Scavenger Hunt is an in-class exercise that asks all students to get up from their seats, move around the room, and discover the names and interests of their classmates. Each student is given a “scavenger list” containing personal (self-descriptive) statements that includes one of their own and one from each of their classmates, which I have drawn from the students’ information sheet. When constructing this list, I intentionally pick statements that are distinctive and/or humorous, but not too personal or private. (See Appendix B for a sample list.) Serendipitously, I’ve discovered that students are almost always delighted or flattered to see something about themselves appear “in print.”

Students take the list and circulate throughout the room to find classmates whose personal statements belong to them. They do this by pairing-up with a classmate, and each member of the pair takes turns trying to identify the personal statement on the list that belong to his or her partner. If the first guess does not produce a match, then the students continue to take turns attempting to identify their partner’s statement. The students continue to alternate this question-asking role until a match is found for each partner, at which time the pair concludes their interaction and each member looks for another partner.

While I provide oral directions for the exercise, I simultaneously project a printed version of the directions on an overhead transparency at the front of the room, so students are able to hear them and see them. I leave the transparency projected during the exercise, so the directions can

be easily checked by anyone who is initially unsure or eventually forgets what to do. (I find that this is a useful strategy for any multi-step class activity.) Before beginning the classmate hunt, I model what students are expected to do by engaging in a short role-play of the exercise with a student volunteer. Prior to starting the exercise, I also acknowledge that people who are shy (like me) may feel a little uncomfortable at first, but assure them that previous students have responded very positively to this exercise, and got more comfortable as it went along. I also provide the class with a rationale for why I'm asking them to do it, and inform them that I will be doing it with them. (I add a personal statement about myself to the scavenger list.) Lastly, I thank them in advance for working with me on this exercise and remind them that they will receive course credit for the final product they submit following its completion. The final product turned-in by each student is a completed list, which contains the names of all their classmates recorded next to their personal statements. If there is class time remaining after completion of the exercise, students are asked to personally reflect on the process and briefly describe the nature of their interactions or their feelings about the exercise. For example, I've asked such reflection questions as:

1. How did you *feel* about participating in this exercise when I *first* described it?
2. In the *middle* of the exercise, did you feel *differently* about it than you did at first?
3. Were you able to *predict or guess* what statements belonged to different individuals based on their appearance and behavior, or were you frequently surprised? Why?
4. Were others able to predict or guess *what statement belonged to you*? Why?
5. Did you find any personal statement on the list to be *particularly interesting, intriguing, or memorable*? Why?
6. Did you meet anyone in class whose interests or experiences were *similar* to yours? If so, can you remember *who* that person was and *what* you had in common?

The time needed to complete the classmate scavenger hunt typically turns out to be about one minute and a half per student. For example, in a class of 20 students, it should take approximately 30 minutes to complete the exercise. If there isn't enough class time remaining following the exercise to answer the personal-reflection questions, I ask students to complete them as a take-home assignment.

Conclusion

The ultimate goal of the classmate scavenger hunt is for every student to connect with every one of their classmates and learn something about each of them. It has been my experience that such early peer interaction helps to create a classroom climate conducive to student participation and collaboration. For students in my freshman seminar, the exercise may also address a primary need of new students at the very beginning of their college experience, because research suggests this is a time when students are most concerned about "fitting in" and establishing social ties. I believe that the classmate scavenger hunt is a proactive strategy that addresses students' initial need for inclusion, facilitates their subsequent social integration, and promotes their eventual retention.

Appendix E

Student Directions for Classmate Scavenger Hunt

GOAL: To find classmates who are associated with the personal statements listed on the provided “scavenger list”.

STEPS:

1. *Pair-up* with a classmate. One of you takes the role of **questioner**—who attempts to find the partner’s description on the list—by reading one description at a time until you find the correct “match.” The other person assumes the role of **respondent**—who answers either “yes” or “no” to the description read by the questioner.
2. **Alternate roles** (the questioner become the respondent and vice versa), and follow the same process described in step 1.
3. Continue alternating roles until one of you finds the statement that matches the respondent. Then **ask for the person’s name and record it next to his or her personal statement** on your copy of the scavenger list.
4. After the first member of your pair finds the statement that belongs to the partner, the second member **continues to play the role of questioner** until s/he finds the first member’s matching statement.
5. After both of you find each other’s matching description, move on to **join another partner**, and continue this pairing-up process until you have met and obtained the signatures of all students in class next to their correct self-description.

IMPORTANT REMINDERS:

- * When you’re asked a question by your partner, you can *only say “yes” or “no.”* Please *do not tell your partner* the statement that describes you, or take your partner’s copy of the list and sign your name until your partner has *discovered and stated* your description.
- * After your partner finds the statement that matches you, do not take your partner’s sheet and write your name on it; instead, please *say your name and have your partner record it.*
- * When trying to find your partner’s personal statement, try to pick statements that you *think* relate to that person, rather than just randomly going down the list. In other words, let’s see how good you are at *guessing or predicting* people’s interests based on their appearance or behavior. (Take a look at the list now to get an idea of the different descriptions you’ll be looking for.)

THANKS!

Appendix F
Sample “Scavenger Sheet”

1. A sarcastic, *former swimming instructor* and *future nurse*, who intends to transfer to *Loma Linda University*: _____
2. A *beach volleyball player* who’s good in *math* and would love to take a spontaneous trip to *Ireland*: _____
3. A *volunteer coach* and *future teacher*, who loves watching *live bands* and may transfer to the University of *Hawaii*: _____
4. A fire-eating *stunt man* who would love to go *scuba-diving* and *glacier-walking* in *Antarctica*: _____
5. A former *scorekeeper* and *assistant trainer* who’s into *sports management*, *philosophy*, and *USC (Trojans)* _____
6. A *Hawaiian surfer* and *future sonographer* who plans to attend *Seattle University*: _____
7. A *computer graphics* major who’s good at *math*, loves the *arts*, and would like to become a *cartoonist*: _____
8. A former *swim instructor*, *lifeguard*, and *peer mediator*, who wants to work with *kids*—as a child psychologist or teacher.: _____
9. A *criminal justice* major who intends to transfer to *Sacramento State University*, and would love to go to *Japan* to party with *family* (relatives): _____
10. An outstanding *water polo* player from *Sacramento* who digs “*wild paintings*” and *punk music*: _____
11. An *animal lover* who’s almost always *smiling*, and would love to be a *zookeeper* in *San Diego*: _____
12. A *dance major* and *business minor* who hopes to own her own *dance studio* someday: _____
13. An extremely *ticklish journalism* major who’s into *science fiction* and the *Simpsons*: _____

14. An actor who wants to study film and theatre, and who's good at riding any type of *board* on any type of *surface* (e.g., water, cement, or snow): _____
15. Enjoys *extreme sports* and *Italian beaches*, but hates *gossip* and men who wear *loafers*: _____
16. A *jazz and opera singer* who would love to live in *Florence, Italy*: _____
17. An *introspective* person who has worked at the *Tournament of Roses* and who loves to talk about *politics or history* _____
18. Has done volunteer work at a *home for battered families*, and lives near *Occidental College*: _____
19. A lover of *movies* and *fashions shows*, who would like to transfer to *New York University*: _____
20. A *bilingual future nurse* who digs *salsa* and *meringue* music: _____
21. A future *film director* with a wide range of *musical interests*, who admires *Walt Disney* and unwinds by playing *golf*: _____
22. A *ballistics weapons expert* with great running *speed*, who has worked as an assistant manager of a *film company*: _____
23. Comedian *Rodney Dangerfield* suddenly appeared at this person's house one day and asked if he could put a billboard on the roof: _____

APPENDIX G

The “New Learning Paradigm”: Learner-Centered Instruction

Joe Cuseo

Introduction

In the mid-1990s, clarion calls were sounded for a “paradigm shift” in undergraduate education from traditional methods of instruction, which have focused on the teacher’s behavior and the teaching process, to a “new learning paradigm” that focuses on the *learner’s* behavior and the *learning* process (American College Personnel Association, 1994; Angelo, 1997; Barr & Tagg, 1995). This shift is well illustrated by comparing the themes of two national conferences organized by the once-influential American Association of Higher Education (AAHE). In 1986, its national conference theme was, “Taking Teaching Seriously”; in 1998, it became, “Taking Learning Seriously” (1998). This teaching-versus-learning distinction is more than a matter of semantics. The new learning paradigm suggests a new starting point for improving undergraduate education that begins with a *focus on the learner* and *what the learner is doing*, rather than focusing on what the instructor is doing (and covering) in the classroom. In the learner-centered paradigm, the definition and goal of effective teaching is *facilitating student learning* and, ultimately, promoting *positive learning outcomes*.

Among the major implications of the new learning paradigm for college instructors and student support-service providers are the following “shifts” in educational philosophy and practice.

1. Instruction becomes less teacher-centered and content-driven, and more *learner-centered* and *learning process-driven*.

For example, instead of having students receive information-loaded lectures devoted exclusively to the coverage course content, learner-centered instruction would involve engaging students in learning experiences that are designed not only to enable them to learn content, but also to learn *process*—the process of “learning how to learn” and developing “lifelong learning” skills.

2. The *student’s role* changes from that of being *passive* recipient or receptacle of information to that of *engaged learner* and *active agent* in the learning process.

Classroom teaching methods may be conceptualized as ranging along a continuum from *instructor-centered* to *learner-centered*. Extreme, instructor-centered teaching is best illustrated by the uninterrupted, formal lecture whereby the instructor does virtually all the talking and is in complete control of the class agenda. In contrast, learner-centered classroom instruction involves less instructor domination and shifts more communication, control, and responsibility to the students.

3. The *instructor’s role* expands from that of a knowledge-laden professor who professes truths and disseminates factual information, to that of being a learning *mediator or facilitator* who

assumes the following roles: (a) educational *architect*— *designing learning tasks* and *creating conditions* that are conducive to optimal learning; (b) educational *consultant/facilitator*—serving as an experienced *coach/guide* during the learning process; and (c) educational *assessor*—evaluating learning outcomes and using this assessment information as *feedback to improve* the teaching-learning process.

In the learner-centered paradigm, students would spend less time being “instructed” (lectured to or at) and more time engaging in learning activities that have them actually *do* something other than the rote recording of lecture notes. Lest we forget, the lecture method still remains the dominant pedagogical strategy used in higher education, showing remarkably little change in its frequency of use over several decades (Bligh, 2000; Bowles, 1982; Costin, 1972; Marris, 1964; Nance & Nance, 1990). Arguably the major force propelling the movement toward learner-centered pedagogy in higher education is the well-documented ineffectiveness of the lecture method for promoting higher learning outcomes.

The Need for Learner-Centered Alternatives to the Lecture Method

Research suggests that college instructors have a tendency to overestimate their students’ level of cognitive involvement in the classroom. For example, Fassinger (1996) surveyed more than 1,000 students in over 50 classes from a wide range of disciplines that met at the same time period; she discovered that students perceive themselves as less involved in the classroom than faculty perceive them to be. While we would like to think that students are engaging in reflective thinking while taking lecture notes, research demonstrating that student note-taking during lectures is often performed in a reflexive, mindless manner. Prolonged performance on a passive, repetitive task (such as continuous note-taking) eventually results in that task being assumed by lower centers of the brain that control automatic behavior, with limited involvement of higher (cortical) areas of the brain responsible for higher-level thinking (Bligh, 2000; Mackworth, 1970). This finding is captured anecdotally in the old saying, “During lectures, information passes from the lecturer’s notes to the students’ notes and through the minds of neither.”) Roland Christensen (1982), an originator and long-time advocate of learning through the case method (case studies), once noted that traditional lecturing is “like dropping ideas into the letter box of the subconscious. You know when they are posted, but you never know when they will be received or in what form” (p. xiv).

In studies of student behavior in undergraduate classrooms, it has been found that about half of the time during lectures, students are thinking about things unrelated to the lecture content (and up to 15% of their class time is spent “fantasizing”) (Milton, Polio, & Eison, 1986). Student *attention and concentration* tend to drop off dramatically after 10-20 minutes of continuous instructor discourse (Penner, 1984; Verner and Dickinson, 1967). However, it is important to note that this attention “drift” during lectures also occurs among students in graduate and professional school (Stuart and Rutheford, 1978) and among learning-oriented (vs. grade-oriented) undergraduate students (Milton, Pollio, & Eison, 1986). Thus, attention loss during lectures cannot be dismissed as a student problem, such as lack of motivation, lack of effort, or an outbreak of attention deficit disorder among today’s youth; instead, the problem seems to lie with the lecture method itself.

It may be that listening attentively to lectures for prolonged periods of time is simply not something that the human brain is particularly well equipped to do. In fact, some neurobiologists

have argued that our brains may not be neurologically wired to process information for prolonged periods of time because it was more adaptive for our early ancestors to have shorter attention spans, which enabled them to quickly to a predator or prey and then shift their attention to the next life-preserving priority (LaBerge, 1995; Sylwester, 1996). This suggests that the human brain processes new information more effectively in shorter, focused sessions (lasting no longer than 15 minutes), followed by opportunities to “act” on that information via activities that involve personal engagement and reflection (Jensen, 1998).

Even if students miraculously managed to maintain attention and concentration throughout a typical 50-minute lecture, research strongly suggests that important educational outcomes, such as higher-level thinking and attitude change, are less likely to take place when students listen to lectures than when they engage in more active forms of learning (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; 2005). For instance, McKeachie et al. (1986) conducted an extensive review of the research literature on college teaching methods and concluded: “If we want students to become more effective in meaningful learning and thinking, they need to spend more time in active, meaningful learning and thinking—not just sitting and passively receiving information” (p. 77). Bonwell and Eison (1991) reached a similar conclusion following their review of the research literature: “The evidence suggests that if an instructor’s goals are not only to impart information but also to develop cognitive skills and to change attitudes, then alternative teaching strategies should be interwoven with the lecture method during classroom presentations” (p. 10). More recently, Bligh (2000) concluded his extensive research review with this recommendation: “*Use lectures to teach information. Do not rely on them to promote thought, change attitudes, or develop behavioral skills if you can help it*” (p. 20).

Implications for First-Year Students

A substantial number of subscribers to this newsletter have professional responsibilities that involve the education and retention of first-year students. For these professionals, and the new students they work with, the implications of the foregoing research become even more significant when they are viewed in light of recent findings relating specifically to first-year students.

Students are entering college today with substantially higher self-reported levels of *academic disengagement* in high school—they more frequently report “feeling bored” in class, missing class, and spending less time on their studies outside of class (Astin, et al., 1997; Sax, et al., 2005). These characteristics apparently carry over to the first year of college, as evidenced by a national survey of first-year educators who were asked to rank 18 different factors in terms of their “level of impact” on first-year students’ academic performance. These educators ranked “lack of [student] motivation” as the number-one factor (Policy Center on the First Year of College, 2003).

Admitting new students to college who report experiencing increasingly lower levels of academic engagement and higher levels of academic boredom in high school, and then immediately immersing these neophytes in lecture-driven introductory courses, appears to be the ideal formula for perpetuating their pre-existing levels of academic disengagement, passivity, and boredom. In his book, *Rejuvenating Introductory Courses*, Kenneth Spear artfully expresses the potentially dangerous consequence of subjecting new students to “disengaging” pedagogy: “In these formative experiences, [students] learn what it is to be a student, what is required to get

by. If students are taught to be passive seekers and transcribers of information, that is what they become. Further, they set their sights accordingly in subsequent courses, often actively resisting our attempts in upper-division courses to get them to go beyond the information we give them” (1984, pp. 6-7).

These results are consistent with those generated by the Policy Center on the First Year of College, based on survey data collected from more than 60 postsecondary institutions and over 30,000 students. This national survey revealed that use of “engaging pedagogy” (for example, class discussions and group work) was positively associated with student satisfaction and self-reported learning outcomes in first year seminars (Swing, 2002). Similar findings emerge from research conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute on first-year courses in general. Based on data gathered from almost 25,000 students at 110 institutions, it was found that the pedagogical practices most strongly associated with first-year students’ satisfaction with the overall quality of instruction at their college were teaching practices that emphasized involvement with peers, faculty, and the course itself (Keup & Sax, 2002).

Conclusion

The research reviewed in this article provides consistent evidence that the lecture method, which continues to be the dominant instructional strategy in college classrooms, is not the optimal vehicle for promoting student learning, particularly learning that involves higher-level thinking and attitudinal change.

My motive for presenting this research was not to imply that lecturing (instructor-delivered information) should be totally dismissed, displaced or replaced. Higher education should still be a place where knowledgeable, learned professionals are able to share their knowledge and model thinking processes that their students can emulate. However, the research reviewed here strongly suggests that the lecture method needs to be augmented, complemented, and punctuated by learner-centered strategies that empower students to take a more active and responsible role in the learning process.

It is beyond the scope of this article to identify and review specific, learner-centered alternatives to the lecture method. Contributors to this newsletter have already shared many inventive, practical alternatives to the lecture method. I would argue that all effective, learner-centered teaching strategies implement one or more of the following four, research-based learning principles.

1. *Active Involvement*—learning becomes deeper and more durable when students become actively *engaged* in the learning process, i.e., they spend more *time* “on task” and invest a higher level mental *energy* in that task (Astin, 1984, 1985a, 1985b, 1993; Kuh, 1991, 2001a, 2001b; National Institute of Education, 1984; Pace, 1984, 1990; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005).

2. *Social Integration*—learning is strengthened through student-instructor and student-student (peer) *interaction and collaboration* (Astin, 1993; Bruffee, 1993; Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1998; Slavin, 1996; Tinto, 1987, 1993).

3. *Self-Reflection*—learning is deepened when students “step back” and *reflect* on their learning strategies (i.e., engage in “meta-cognition”); and when students reflect on their learning

experiences—*transforming* these experiences into a form that *makes sense* or has *personal meaning* to them (“elaboration”)—enabling them to build *relevant conceptual connections* between what they are trying to learn and what they have *already know* (i.e., knowledge is personally “constructed”) (Flavell, 1985; Joint Task Force on Student Learning, 1998; Piaget, 1972; Vygotsky, 1978; Weinstein & Meyer, 1991).

4. ***Personal Validation***—learning is enhanced when students feel personally *significant*, i.e., when they feel recognized as *individuals* and sense that they *matter* to their instructor and their classmates (Rendon, 1994; Rendon & Garza, 1996; Schlossberg, Lynch, Chickering, 1989).

When learner-centered teaching strategies effectively implement these principles, they can be expected to exert simultaneous and synergistic effects on student learning, student motivation, and student retention.

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APPENDIX H

THE ART & SCIENCE OF MAKING *STUDENT REFERRALS*: SUGGESTED STRATEGIES

Because of the student-centered nature of the first-year seminar, students often turn to their course instructors for advice or help with academic and personal problems. Sometimes, this will necessitate a student referral to a professional on campus who is better prepared to provide assistance than the course instructor. Listed below are some suggested strategies for increasing the effectiveness of student referrals.

1. *Describe* the **goals and services** of the referred service. (Don't assume that the student already know its purpose or function.)
2. *Personalize* the referral: Refer the student to a **person** (a **name**)—rather than an office.
3. Reassure the student of the **qualifications and capability** of the person to whom s/he is being referred.
4. Help the student identify *what questions* to ask and *how* to **approach** the resource person.
5. Make explicitly sure that the student knows **where** to go and how to get there.
6. **Phone** for an appointment while the student is *in your presence*.
7. **Walk** with the student to the referred person's *office*.
8. **Follow-up** the initial referral by asking the student *if* the contact occurred, *how* it went, and whether there will be *future* contact.
9. **Praise** the student for making the effort to seek support and taking a step toward self-improvement.

APPENDIX I

THE COURSE SYLLABUS: Key Purposes, Functions, Elements & Components

◆ **Key Purposes & Functions of the Syllabus**

1. Provides a *sense of direction* by articulating course goals and objectives.
 2. Serves as an *advanced organizer* of course content by delineating its core components and conceptual sequence.
 3. Clarifies *mutual expectations* of the instructor and students by serving as a “written contract” between both parties.
 4. Creates a sense of *positive anticipation* and promotes student motivation by creating a favorable “first impression” of the course.
-

◆ **Key Elements & Components of the Syllabus**

1. Instructor Information

- ___ Instructor's *name*
- ___ *Educational* background &/or *professional* qualifications
- ___ Office *location* (building & room #)
- ___ Office *hours*
- ___ Office *phone number*
- ___ *E-Mail* address
- ___ *Fax* number (if any)
- ___ *Home* phone number (optional) (If you opt to include, consider specifying acceptable hours)

2. Practical Course Details

- ___ *Course title and number*
- ___ *Name of college*
- ___ *Semester & year* during which the course is being taught
- ___ *Class time* (days of week & *time* of day when class meets; plus lab hours, if applicable)
- ___ *Class location* (campus building & room #)
- ___ *Course units* (# of *credits*)
- ___ *Degree requirement fulfilled* by the course (if any)
- ___ *Course prerequisites* or *co-requisites* (if any)
- ___ *Dates* through which students may *add/drop*, or *withdraw* without receiving a “W”
- ___ *Disability* statement: “Any student who feel he/she may qualify for accommodations for any type of disability, make an appointment with Disability Director in the Learning Center.”
- ___ Statement reminding students to *save the syllabus* (to ensure or negotiate transfer credit)

3. **Course Description**

- ___ *Narrative course description*—that is consistent with the course catalogue description—but which expands on it, and provides students with a more complete view of what the course is about than that which can be expressed within the spatial confines of the course catalogue. (Note: To enhance course transferability, highlight key theoretical and methodological issues to be explored in the course.)

- ___ Statement of *how students will benefit from the course* (e.g., personally and professionally; immediately and in the future).

4. **Excerpt from the College Mission Statement**

Marymount’s academic and co-curricular programs aspire to prepare students to be thoughtful, caring, and effective members within their family, community, society, and the world. We seek to develop a sense of universal meaning, a global and historical perspective, and a shared understanding of the common humanity that is the basis for community among diverse national, cultural, and social backgrounds. Reflective personal insight, a spirit of service to others, and a concern for social justice through a commitment to living in an ethically responsible way are significant characteristics of the education we foster. We enable students to develop the foundation for competencies necessary for entry, growth, and success in chosen careers as well as the enthusiasm to be a lifelong learner.

5. **Course Goals**

- Broad, visionary aims or purposes of the course that are designed to stimulate and motivate learning, giving students something to strive for and something they would be proud to achieve.
- ___ Include course goals that contribute to students’ *holistic (whole-person) development*.
- ___ Include course goals that relate to *lifelong learning skills*.
- ___ Include course goals that relate to the goals of *liberal (general) education*.
- ___ Relate course goals to the *mission and goals of the college* (e.g., via selected excerpts)
- ___ Relate course goals to the goals of your *academic department or division*.

6. Course Objectives

Specific action-verb indicators of how a course goal will be realized that are stated in terms of *intended outcomes* or *expected results*, which focus on what the *learner* should be able to *know*, *do*, or *possess* at the end of the course, and how this learning will be *displayed or demonstrated* (rather than focusing on the subject matter—i.e., what content will be covered, or the teacher—i.e., what instructional methods will be used). It is recommended that approximately five high-priority course objectives be included in the course syllabus. As a starting point for transforming course goals into course objectives with intended outcomes, review your course examinations and assignments—to identify intended outcomes that you emphasize heavily and repeatedly; and/or review the objectives of different textbooks designed for the course—to identify intended outcomes that appear thematically across different texts. Note: This is not to suggest that textbooks should ultimately define the objectives of your course. More importantly, this decision must be guided by the mission of your college, the goals of your department, the characteristics of your students, and your personal pedagogical values. (For more detailed information on formulating course objectives, see the next section of this sourcebook.)

- ___ Include objectives that require *more than factual or knowledge-level outcomes*—e.g., critical-thinking objectives that demand more than rote memory, such as application, evaluation, and integration. (See Support Materials, pp. 4-5.)
- ___ If possible, include *more than cognitive (intellectual)* objectives—e.g., attitudinal or affective and objectives. (See Support Materials, p. 1.)

7. Course Outline

- ___ List major course *topics*—indicating breadth of coverage, and *subtopics*—indicating depth of coverage and topic infrastructure.
- ___ A *topic timeline/schedule* is recommended, which indicates the dates when specific course topics will be covered during the semester. (An alternative approach is to indicate a tentative timeline that is subject to change, depending upon the progress of the class.)

8. Instructional Methods & Materials

- ___ Classroom *teaching techniques* (e.g., lecture, discussion, cooperative learning, audio-visuals) and a short rationale for why they are being used.
- ___ Required *textbook & other reading sources* (e.g., articles; teacher-constructed materials)
- ___ *Supplemental reading* list (including books/periodicals available in the college library or placed on library reserve).

9. Methods for Evaluating Student Performance

- ___ *Assignments* (e.g., nature, number, format, due dates, and their relative point value or percentage of student's final course grade)
- ___ *Exams, tests, & quizzes* (e.g., nature, number, format, due dates, and their relative point value or percentage of student's final course grade)
- ___ *Date of final exam and final project* (if any)

- ___ *Grading* scheme/system (It is recommended that grades be criterion-referenced—i.e., based on absolute standards, rather than norm-referenced—i.e., grading “on a curve”).
- ___ Policy regarding *missed or late* tests/assignments
- ___ Policy concerning class *attendance, punctuality, & classroom decorum*
- ___ Policy on *academic integrity* (e.g., cheating and plagiarism) that is consistent with the college’s statement on academic integrity—as stated in the *Faculty Handbook*).

APPENDIX J

FORMULATING COURSE *OBJECTIVES & INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES*

A well-formulated course objective includes reference to a specific action that the learner engages in, which serves as a *concrete indicator* that a general course goal has been realized, thus transforming goals that are implicit or invisible into objectives that are *explicit and observable*. For example, the general and abstract *cognitive* goal of promoting student “understanding” or “comprehension” may be transformed into an objective that incorporates any of the following concrete action verbs: (a) “distinguish between” (b) “explain in one’s own words,” (c) “predict,” (d) “evaluate,” (e) “list the consequences of”, (f) “classify,” or (g) “apply to a new situation.” Similarly, the abstract *attitudinal or affective* goal of “appreciation” may be transformed into an objective that incorporates any of the following concrete action verbs: (a) “persists,” (b) “seeks” (c) “chooses,” (d) “consults,” (e) “explores” (f) “attends,” (g) “volunteers,” (h) “enrolls,” (i) “joins,” or (j) “purchases.”

There are two defining characteristics of a course objective expressed in terms of a measurable learning outcome: (a) inclusion of a specific *verb* that indicates an observable action to be taken by the learner, and (b) inclusion of a specific course *concept* on which this action is taken. For example, the following course objectives contain both of these key characteristics:

1. Students will be able to *recognize* illustrations and applications of the major *theories of human learning*.
2. Students will be able to *cite* the major *factors influencing human motivation*, and illustrate how they apply to student motivation in college.

This is not to say that the course objective is entirely reducible to these designated actions, i.e., the goal is not equivalent to the specific action cited in the objective. The action taken by the learner in the objective represents only an *indicator*, drawn from a population of possible indicators, which demonstrates that the course objective has been learned.

It is acknowledged that not all outcomes of instruction can be anticipated in advance. There may

be unanticipated outcomes (good or bad) that emerge during the teaching of any course. However, unanticipated positive outcomes should be noted and built into the plan of intended outcomes the next time the course is taught. Hence, the process of identifying intended outcomes for inclusion in course objectives becomes both a deductive and inductive process that is ongoing or cyclical, with previously unanticipated positive outcomes being added to or replacing objectives from the list of originally intended outcomes. “Not all outcomes are intended, encouraged, planned, or anticipated, and side effects may be as important as intended outcomes. Thus, although institutions must attempt to state clearly their missions, goals, and outcomes/objectives, they must maintain sufficient flexibility to permit revisions as the process unfolds” (Pratt, 1995, p. 147).

While acknowledging that not all outcomes can be planned in advance and that some generic outcomes may be realized long after a course is completed, this is not to argue that taking the time taken to articulate specific course objectives in advance is a futile or worthless endeavor. Bloom, Madaus, & Hasting (1981) point out the folly of this argument: “The claim is made that the student develops certain attitudes, values, or skills that are not immediately apparent and may not reveal themselves until much later in life, long after school has been completed. No one will deny that there are many enigmatic, intangible, and unidentifiable long-term outcomes that result from instruction. But to claim that these intangibles are the only important objectives for the classroom teacher is to adopt the untenable position that one cannot prove anything has ever been taught. For purposes of meaningful evaluation at least, objectives must be stated in terms of more readily observable outcomes or changes on the student’s part, so that a teacher can determine whether the student is making progress” (1981, pp. 35-36).

In addition, clearly stated course objectives can serve the following important *educational* functions:

- (1) By first clarifying the *ends* of instruction, instructors are then better positioned to identify the *means of instruction*, i.e., clearly stated objectives serve to guide the selection of *teaching methods and materials*.
- (2) Translating course goals into specific objectives that identify intended outcomes serves to guide selection of the *means (methods) for evaluating student performance* (e.g., testing and grading practices).
- (3) Clearly stated objectives benefit *students* by *clarifying performance expectations* and *directing student study time* toward learning what which is most important to learn.
- (4) Clearly stated, consensually determined course objectives serve to benefit *departmental faculty* who teach the same course, encouraging greater consistency with respect to content coverage, assessment practices, and performance standards across different course sections.

Furthermore, course objectives with clear intended outcomes serve to clarify prerequisite skills and exit competencies in sequential or cumulative courses taught within the department.

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