

## Introduction

Welcome to *Students' Pathway to Success: A Faculty Guide*, our collection about ways to make teaching a more positive, productive and enjoyable experience. Written collaboratively by the Top 40 Academy, a faculty professional learning community at UNC Charlotte, this book began as a new student induction effort aimed at the 40 or so largest courses on campuses with the greatest number of new student enrollments.

This book intends to prepare faculty who teach students new to the university to help create a positive academic experience for both first-time students and students who transfer in.

This book is based on five educational assumptions about teaching for success. A teacher must:

1. Inspire a commitment to success that helps students set goals and strategies for achieving those goals.
2. Initiate an inquiry process that makes students responsible for their own progress.
3. Instill cultural awareness so students will be aware of cultural and experiential differences.
4. Create a way to help students determine where they belong and how they can make their mark through community awareness.
5. Introduce knowledge of resources students can use to enhance and support their college experiences.

The Center for Teaching and Learning at UNC Charlotte brought together 34 faculty members from different colleges and departments to combine their efforts to write *Students' Pathway to Success: A Faculty Guide* and to share their knowledge and experience with other

instructors who teach new students on our campus. Seven multidisciplinary faculty teams worked collaboratively to write the chapters. The goal of this book is to inform and assist faculty in implementing the best practices to help their students succeed at UNC Charlotte. We hope that it will serve as both a resource guide and an encouragement to all who wish to teach deeply and meaningfully.

The book is divided into two sections: “Expectations” and “Opportunities.” The chapters in “Expectations” discuss the practices and policies that students in Top 40 courses should experience. These chapters focus on the new student induction goals of Commitment to Success and Resources.

Top 40 courses also create multiple opportunities to engage students in the learning experience. The chapters in the “Opportunities” section reflect the three new student induction goals of Inquiry, Cultural Awareness and Community.

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# Constructing Your Course Syllabus: Requirements & Recommendations for Building Dynamic and Functional Syllabi

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## Abstract

The Course Syllabus is easily the most important document that you will prepare for a course: it sets the tone of the course, determines the depth, scope and sequence of the content, explicates boundaries and expectations for student and instructor behaviors and interaction, establishes the procedures and norms of assessment, and provides resources for additional information and context. This document will guide you to prepare a syllabus that not only meets the legal and accreditation standards for UNC Charlotte, but also serves as a dynamic curricular resource for both your students and yourself. This document serves as a textual companion to the accompanying syllabus templates for Microsoft Word and Moodle.

### **What's the big deal about writing a syllabus?**

The Course Syllabus is easily the most important document that you will prepare for a course: it sets the tone of the course, determines the depth, scope and sequence of the content, explicates boundaries and expectations for student and instructor behaviors and interaction, establishes the procedures and norms of assessment, and provides resources for additional information and context. This document will guide you to prepare a syllabus that not only meets the legal and accreditation standards for UNC Charlotte, but also serves as a dynamic curricular resource for both your students and yourself.

### **What is a syllabus?**

Naturally, the study of “Syllabus” has to begin with a misunderstanding. In the original Greek the word *sittuba* meant a “title slip” or “label”, such as one might use beneath a painting or sculpture. Of course the Romans stole the word (along with the artwork above it) for their *sittybas*, and, inevitably, a 19<sup>th</sup> century academic misspelled it “syllabus” and furthermore misused it to mean a “concise table of headings of a text.” Faculty being the same then as now, his colleagues intended to mention it to him (right after lunch), but soon Newton’s first law took over and now we’re stuck with the error.

Today, a syllabus serves four main purposes:

- **A course planning tool for the instructor.**

Carefully constructing or editing an existing syllabus helps the instructor prepare and organize the course. Building a detailed syllabus will help you define and prioritize course goals and learning objectives, structure and sequence assignments, exams, review sessions, and other activities, and determine how much time you should devote to each topic.

- **A course prospectus for the student.**

The syllabus is a *prospectus* that answers, “why should I take this course?” or “how does this fit into my degree?”. The syllabus communicates to students a clear idea of the course content, your approach to teaching it, and what they can expect to do and to learn while completing course requirements, as well as the reason they are doing them.

- **A contract between the instructor and student**

The syllabus is very much a *contract*, and should be treated just that carefully. It is a contract between the instructor and student that sets out course requirements and policies regarding grading, academic integrity, student conduct, attendance, late work, and many other common issues. [University policy](#) dictates that students are responsible for reading and understanding the syllabus, the terms to which they implicitly agree when they take the course.

One of your colleagues who has served on a Grade Review Committee over the course of many years relates that the vast majority of student complaints and grade appeals stem from a poorly written syllabus or one where the standards were capriciously applied (often the case when the instructors were using an “inherited” syllabus).

A quality syllabus, with reasonable standards that are consistently applied, that is also repeatedly referenced throughout the semester, is your best defense against student complaints.

- **A reference guide**

The syllabus provides students with a compendium of information that they will consult throughout the course, including logistical information (e.g., course name, number and section, prerequisites and expected prior knowledge, instructor’s name and contact information), a

course calendar (including due dates, exam times, etc.) and course requirements, grading, and policies.

### **What goes into a syllabus?**

A syllabus can take as many forms as there are teachers – it can be a single, lengthy document containing everything, a collection of inter-referenced documents with each serving a specialized purpose, a web page embedded into the Moodle course page, or any combination thereof.

While the format may be variable, there are commonalities among all of them – each contains content that is **REQUIRED** by law, policy, or accreditation, content that is **STRONGLY RECOMMENDED** by best practices, and content that is **NICE TO HAVE**. We will talk more specifically about each of these in a later section.

### **Can't I just recycle someone else's?**

Sadly, no, for three reasons:

**The first reason is practical.** A syllabus must reflect the teaching style and strengths of the instructor, or implementing it will be difficult and inconsistent. While some departments on campus will insist that you use their assigned syllabus, you will still have to thoroughly edit and revise the document to make it relevant for the methods and style of *your* classroom, using your background and abilities as a teacher. Syllabi acquired from any other, external sources are highly problematic in that they will almost certainly contain language and policies that may not mesh with the regulations and culture here at UNC Charlotte. Finally, the creation (or heavy editing) of a syllabus is an essential intellectual exercise that helps you to focus and narrow the

vast field of your expertise into the small, discrete chunks of information that undergraduates are able to digest during this one course.

**The second reason is legal.** At the end of the day, you – individually - are legally responsible for the content and conduct of your class. If there is a student complaint about the policies, procedures, or grading in your class, it is you who will be standing in front of the review board, not the department, or that guy from Bemidji State from whom you inherited the syllabus. *You* will be required to defend the inclusion (or omission) of any component of your syllabus, or explain how it was applied. If you are going to be held responsible for it, shouldn't you own it?

If that isn't sufficient, it is one of the few overtly stated requirements for faculty here at UNC Charlotte:

Faculty members are expected to prepare a syllabus for their classes. Faculty should consult relevant university, college, and department policies when preparing course syllabi.<sup>1</sup>

And further:

[F]aculty members have the responsibility to specify in each of their courses at the beginning of the academic term: a) course requirements and expectations for academic performance; and b) procedures for evaluating performance (method(s) of evaluation and grading scales). Faculty members must also communicate clearly to all students in the course any subsequent additions to or changes in these requirements, standards, and procedures. Finally, faculty members have the responsibility to

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<sup>1</sup> *Job Responsibilities and Essential Functions for Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty*. UNC Charlotte, 2013. Available from [http://provost.uncc.edu/sites/provost.uncc.edu/files/media/epa/Job Responsibilities and Essential Functions for Tenured and Tenure.4.25.13.doc](http://provost.uncc.edu/sites/provost.uncc.edu/files/media/epa/Job%20Responsibilities%20and%20Essential%20Functions%20for%20Tenured%20and%20Tenure-Track%20Faculty.4.25.13.doc)

apply the specified grading criteria equitably to the academic performance of all students in the course...<sup>2</sup>

**The third reason is ethical.** Creating a syllabus is part and parcel of accepting the position as a college teacher. People pay tuition in trust that the instructor is fully prepared to deliver the academic content in a meaningful, well-planned structure; the work the instructor places in preparing the syllabus is the largest single component of that earned trust. To simply appropriate someone else's work would not be intellectually honest.

### **Writing your syllabus**

This section of the document assumes you will be writing a syllabus yourself. If you have inherited a syllabus from the department this section will still be useful in helping you understand and evaluate the sections of the existing syllabus, and perhaps even suggest improvements to the existing document.

Regardless if you are creating a new or editing an existing syllabus, put the kettle on, because this is going to take quite some time to accomplish. We'll start with the hard part...

### **Preparatory work**

Before you can write the syllabus, you will need to assemble a whole slew of information:

- Which students enroll in this course? (year in school, class size, prior knowledge and experience, motivation, etc.)
- Most of a new teacher's frustration stems from miss-answering this question. That is, teachers' may often assume that their students will hold previous knowledge and have a

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<sup>2</sup> [http://legal.uncc.edu/policies/up-410 - \\_ftnref1](http://legal.uncc.edu/policies/up-410_-_ftnref1)



disposition that in actuality doesn't reflect the reality of the students sitting in front of them. Disappointment and conflict inevitably ensues.

- What role does this course play in the overall educational experience of the students who take it? (LBST, elective, required, majors-only, lower or upper division, prerequisite for other classes, etc.)
- In what kind of curriculum is this course embedded? (How does it relate to other courses? What courses does it build on? What courses follow it?)
- What external professional standards need to be met? ([University College requirements](#), accrediting bodies, etc.)
- What kind of learning space will you have? (Classroom, lab, or other? Fixed desks? Movable chairs? Media equipment?)
- What is the [Academic Calendar](#) for this semester?
- Which texts or materials have been adopted/ordered for the course?
- What is the [official catalog copy](#) for the course? The *course outline*?<sup>3</sup>

Each of these answers will have a profound impact on the choices you will make for the syllabus. You will still want to have a firm grasp on all of these factors even if you are using an inherited syllabus, as it will still apply to how you interpret the course objectives.

Now that we have a great start going and have gathered all the information we need to proceed, it is time for a digression.

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<sup>3</sup> The Course Outline is a required component of the *Course and Curriculum Proposal Long Form* that was approved through the Course & Curriculum Committee. It should be on file in your Department office. Somewhere.

## Writing Observable, Measurable Learning Outcomes: Goals vs. Objectives

Despite the arcane title, this section is not only the heart of your syllabus, but also the lungs and spleen. Your tea should be ready by this time, take a deep draught and we'll progress through it step-by-step.

First, we have to understand that there is much confusion about this section, even among veteran teachers and experts in education – the terms “Learning Outcomes,” “Goals,” and “Objectives”<sup>4</sup> are sometimes employed interchangeably in the research literature. For the purposes of this document (and sanity), we will employ the definitions that the College of Education and NCATE favors, to wit:

“Course Objectives” are the measurable, observable behaviors, knowledge or skills that can be directly observed and assessed for a grade during this present semester, “Course Goals” are the larger, more amorphous dispositional phrases that help to place this course in context within a discipline or society, and “Learning Outcomes” is the macro designation that encompasses both of the other two terms. Some find utility in comparing Course Goals to “Strategy” and Course Objectives to “Tactics,” or perhaps “Ideas” to “Behaviors”.

These terms were presented to you in that particular order because every syllabus must have the “Course Objectives” explicitly stated (REQUIRED by SACS accreditation and the University), should also have the “Course Goals” (STRONGLY RECOMMENDED), and occasionally must reference the Student “Learning Outcomes” if you are in the [College of Education](#).

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<sup>4</sup> Or, “Learning Objectives,” “Objective Outcomes,” or, most confusingly, “Objective Goals.”

A great deal has been published<sup>5</sup> about how to write clear Course Objectives; below is a quick summary of the main points:

- Course objectives describe the core knowledge and skills that the student should derive from the course. In this capacity, Course Objectives could serve as a neat preparation for a comprehensive final exam.
- All readings, lectures, discussions, assignments and exams should derive from and reinforce the Course Objectives. If it happens in your class, it should be referenced in/to the objectives.
- Course Objectives must be observable and measurable. Normally, they will be written something similar to, “At the end of this course, the student will be (should be) able to...”
- Rather than use broad, vague verbs such as “know” or “understand” (e.g., “...the student will be able to understand...”), Course Objectives are written using verbs that signify an observable, measurable behavior (e.g., “...the student will be able to define...”)

Table 1 contains a representative list of these kinds of “observable & measurable” verbs to get you started.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Please see the included References for the literature that most closely relates to your own field.

<sup>6</sup> These are derived from Bloom’s Taxonomy. Much more information is available [here](#).

**Table 1 : Action Verbs to use in Course Objectives**

<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Understand</b>	<b>Apply</b>	<b>Analyze</b>	<b>Evaluate</b>	<b>Create</b>
copy	ask	act	advertise	appraise	adapt
define	associate	administer	analyze	argue	anticipate
describe	cite	apply	appraise	assess	arrange
discover	classify	articulate	break	choose	assemble
duplicate	compare	calculate	calculate	compare	collaborate
enumerate	contrast	change	categorize	conclude	collect
examine	convert	chart	classify	consider	combine
identify	demonstrate	choose	compare	convince	compile
label	describe	collect	conclude	criticize	compose
list	differentiate	complete	connect	critique	create
listen	discover	compute	contrast	debate	design
locate	discuss	construct	correlate	decide	develop
match	distinguish	demonstrate	criticize	defend	devise
memorize	estimate	determine	deduce	discriminate	express
name	examples	develop	devise	distinguish	facilitate
observe	explain	discover	diagram	editorialize	formulate
omit	express	dramatize	differentiate	errors	generalize
quote	extend	employ	discriminate	estimate	hypothesize
read	generalize	establish	dissect	evaluate	imagine
recall	give	examine	distinguish	find	infer
recite	group	experiment	divide	grade	integrate
recognize	identify	explain	down	judge	intervene
record	illustrate	illustrate	estimate	justify	invent
repeat	indicate	interpret	evaluate	measure	justify
reproduce	infer	interview	experiment	order	make
retell	interpret	judge	explain	persuade	manage
select	judge	list	focus	predict	modify
state	observe	manipulate	illustrate	rank	negotiate
tabulate	order	modify	infer	rate	organize
tell	paraphrase	operate	order	recommend	originate
visualize	predict	paint	organize	reframe	plan
	relate	practice	out	score	prepare
	report	predict	outline	select	produce
	represent	prepare	plan	summarize	propose
	research	produce	point	support	rearrange
	restate	record	prioritize	test	reorganize
	review	relate	question	weigh	report
	rewrite	report	select		revise
	select	schedule	separate		rewrite
	show	show	subdivide		role-play
	summarize	simulate	survey		schematize
	trace	sketch	test		simulate
	transform	solve			speculate
	translate	teach			structure
		transfer			substitute
		use			support
		write			validate
					write

**Table 2 : Examples of Course Objectives in STEM subjects**

<b>Weakly written</b>	<b>Well written</b>
Know how to use t-tests and chi-square tests in data analysis	Describe the assumptions underlying t-tests and chi-square tests and use these tests to statistically compare two samples
Understand how to measure the association between a given risk factor and a disease	Define and calculate measures of association between a given risk factor and a disease
Basic strategies for assessing environmental health hazards	List, describe, and compare the advantages and disadvantages of the basic strategies for assessing environmental health hazards
Know about Medicare and Medicaid	Compare and contrast Medicare and Medicaid with respect to political history, governmental roles, client eligibility, financing, benefits, and cost-sharing

The following is summarized from "Writing Learning Objectives," a publication of the American College Of Occupational and Environmental Medicine:

### ***How Should Course Objectives Be Written?***

Start with the phrase: "At the conclusion of this course, students should be able to:" and then state the things students will be able to do. Be sure to use specific action verbs (behavioral terms) in these statements - verbs such as "identify," "cite," "describe," or "assess." If you follow this simple format and keep the list of verbs by your side, it is almost impossible to write a bad set of objectives!

### ***Common Mistakes***

Verbs such as "know" and "understand" are vague, and are best used for Course Goals (strategy) rather than Objectives (tactics). Avoid these words and use action verbs such as

those from the list provided. “Understanding” can have a myriad of meanings and it can be difficult to evaluate whether a learner “understands” a concept. However, a course objective that states that a physician “will be able to cite the risk factors for breast cancer” can be evaluated consistently whether it has been achieved.

Often syllabi list **teaching objectives** rather than **learning objectives**. For example, “To acquaint the clinician with the key clinical features necessary for the diagnosis of common rheumatic diseases.” “To update, reinforce, and provide new information regarding the etiology, pathogenesis, diagnosis, treatment, and prognosis of herniated thoracic disc.” These objectives focus on what the **instructor** plans to do, rather than what the **student outcome** will be.

Some faculty find the following grid a useful way of lining up Course Objectives and course activities, and then include a version on the syllabus:

	<b>At the end of this course, students should be able to:</b> Start Course Objective with an action verb	<b>This objective will be evaluated primarily by [assignment or activity]:</b>	<b>Course topics (&amp; dates) that advance these Objectives (build up to this assignment or activity) are:</b>
Course Objective 1	e.g., Demonstrate... _____	_____ _____	_____ _____
Course Objective 2	Complete... _____	_____ _____	_____ _____
Course Objective 3	Evaluate... _____	_____ _____	_____ _____

***These questions might help you flesh out the grid:***

- What kinds of skills do the students need to have in order to be successful in the course, and how will assignments and feedback help develop them?
- Will students have any choice in assignments, to develop existing interests or increase engagement?

- How can you give students multiple opportunities to practice the skills and develop the behaviors and abilities identified in the outcomes, allowing them to develop and refine skills?
- What kinds of instructional approaches are most conducive to engage students in the course concepts and help students accomplish these course objectives?
- Can you vary approaches to engage different learners? Will students discuss, solve problems, work in teams, develop projects, keep journals? Will students be expected to participate in discussions, to contribute ideas and/or resources?
- How do assignments and activities capitalize on what students bring to the class – their skills, experience, knowledge? How can students collaborate, to draw on their own and their peers' existing knowledge and skills and to refine what they already know and generate new awareness, knowledge, and skills?
- What kind of interactions will help students develop their understanding and skills, and critically explore core concepts in your course? (Teacher-student, student-student, student-peer tutor, student -community?) How will classroom interactions be facilitated? How will interaction occur outside the classroom?
- How and when will students get (and give peers) timely feedback on activities and assignments, with opportunities to revise or adjust their learning?

### **Sections of the Syllabus**

Now that you have your Course Goals, Objectives, and Activities – it is time to put them into order...



Note that you can choose to put some information on Moodle rather than including it on the written document. It is always a good idea, however, to put the “essential information” listed below on the printed syllabus, even if it also appears online.

**REQUIRED**

- **Course Information**

Title, number, section, time, days, and location; URL for course Web site, if applicable.

- **Contact Information**

Name and contact information of instructor(s) and, if applicable, TA(s)

In addition, indicate how students should contact you, whether by e-mail or by phone, for example; include the appropriate contact information. If the course has TAs, be sure to include their contact information, as well. Include times, days, and locations of office hours, as well as study groups and help sessions.

- **Prerequisites**

Course prerequisites communicate your assumptions about your students and help the students determine whether they have completed the necessary academic preparation for the course.

- **Topics outline/General Course Content**

The outline may be detailed or not, depending on your expectations for students’ preparation and learning. For example, if you want students to come to class ready to discuss particular chapters or articles, your outline will be detailed, listing the specific reading assignment for each day of class; in this case, the topic outline will be equivalent to the course schedule (see below). If you are using a lecture format, on the other hand, you may prefer to list the number

of days you expect to spend on each topic and the portion of the required texts that are related to the lectures during those days.

- **Assignments and exams**

Briefly describe the nature and format of assignments; add a note indicating that detailed assignments will be distributed and posted on the course Web page, if applicable, at a later date. Include due dates for major assignments such as papers, presentations, and projects, as well as any initial drafts or other preliminary work. Indicate the nature, date, and length of any exam.

- **Methods of Evaluation, Grading scale and policies**

Explain the grading scale, indicating the weight of each component, such as homework, papers, quizzes, exams, reports, and participation, within the course grade. Indicate whether the grade is determined on a “curve” or an absolute scale. Note whether any graded assignment can be dropped and how that dropped grade will affect the final grade. Indicate policy on re-grades, if applicable. Direct students to find applicable grading rubrics that you can provide both on paper and on Moodle. Some teachers find utility from a Final Grade Checklist that enumerates the methods of evaluation and which the students maintain and must turn in at the end of the semester. This helps insure they are monitoring their own progress and keeps them actively engaged with the syllabus (see below).

- **Required Materials (e.g., texts, materials, and supplies)**

Information about each text should include the title, author, edition, publisher, and where the text can be purchased, borrowed or accessed (if placing material on the library reserve-system, or on Moodle). If students will need additional materials such as a calculator, safety equipment,

or art supplies, provide a detailed list and indicate where the materials can be acquired. For each text or other material, specify whether it is “required” or “optional, but recommended.”

- **Course description/Course Outline**

The description should be consistent with that which appears in the University catalog; it may be even more detailed, providing a clear idea of the specific course topic and its significance.

**STRONGLY RECOMMENDED**

- **Statement of Disability Accommodations**

If you have a disability that qualifies you for academic accommodations, contact the Office of Disability Services in Fretwell 230 or call 704-687-4355 at the beginning of the semester. Some requests for accommodations cannot be honored without supporting documentation from the Office of Disability Services. All information shared with the instructor concerning a disability will remain strictly confidential unless otherwise specified by the instructor.

- **Caveat**

Indicate that the University specifically expresses your right to make reasonable adjustments or changes to the Syllabus throughout the semester. Remind students that they are responsible to learn of these changes if they miss any class time.

I may modify the standards and requirements set forth in this syllabus at any time. Notice of such changes will be by announcement in class [or by written or email notice], or by changes to this syllabus posted on the course website in Moodle.

- **A Related-Documents Clause**

If your syllabus is divided among several documents (e.g., a Course Calendar, a Final Grade Checklist, and an Assignments page), or both in paper and on Moodle, you will need a clause in your master document that binds them all together:

Included with the distribution of this syllabus is the most up-to-date course calendar, an explanation of grading criterion and rationale, and the Final Grade Checklist (or Moodle). They are considered an integral part of this syllabus and are part and parcel of the requirements and guidelines contained herein.

- **Course Goals**

This section helps the students to place meaning on this course beyond the immediate utility of progress towards a degree. This is the spot where you may make the case that this course helps to improve their lives and society at large (expressly called for in our University Mission) and that it also may be applicable to their careers. Students will not make these inferences on their own, you must lead them to it.

- **Additional course requirements**

Include dates and descriptions of required events such as field trips, seminars, additional sessions, or study groups.

- **Additional course policies**

Explain in detail policies concerning attendance; class participation; late work; missed exams; academic integrity; requests for extensions and for rescheduling of exams; and expectations for student conduct in the classroom, laboratory, or studio. Keep in mind that incidents of academic integrity are on the rise, and instructors need to take a proactive approach in preventing and responding to these incidents. Please include a specific reference to the [\*Code of Student Academic Integrity\*](#).

All students are required to read and abide by the Code of Student Academic Integrity. Violations of the Code of Student Academic Integrity, including plagiarism, will result in disciplinary action as provided in the Code. Definitions and examples of plagiarism are set forth in the Code. The Code is available from the Dean of Students Office or online at: <http://www.legal.uncc.edu/policies/ps-105.html>

Faculty may ask students to produce identification at examinations and may require students to demonstrate that graded assignments completed outside of class are their own work.

- **Course schedule**

Include on the course schedule the dates that you will be covering specific topics, the due dates for major assignments, and the date of the final exam. The more detailed the course schedule, the more useful it will be for the students. When preparing the schedule, consult the relevant [academic calendars](#) and keep in mind religious holidays and significant campus events (for example, Homecoming and Midterm).

**NICE TO HAVE**

- **Student resources**

List information about relevant resources that might be helpful to students in your course, such as those found at academic mentoring, tutoring, and disability resources, and the [University Library](#). Include information about any available lecture notes or videotapes of lectures.

- **Supplementary material**

Include a note about any relevant supplementary materials such as study hints, safety guidelines, information about exam preparation, and online resources; the note might, for example, direct students to find these materials on the course Web site.

- **Final Exam date and time** (often not the regular class time or day)
- [Inclement weather policy](#)
- **Diversity Commitment statement**

UNC Charlotte is committed to social justice and respect for all individuals, and it seeks to create a culture of inclusion that actively

supports all who live, work, and serve in a diverse nation and world. Attaining justice and respect involves all members of our community in recognizing that multi-dimensional diversity contributes to the university learning environments, thereby enriching the community and improving opportunities for human understanding. While the term “diversity” is often used to refer to differences, this class’s intention is for inclusiveness, an inclusiveness of individuals who are diverse in ability/disability, age, economic status, ethnicity, gender, language, national origin, race, religion, and sexual orientation. Therefore, this class aspires to become a more diverse community in order to extend its enriching benefits to all participants. An essential feature of our community is an environment that supports exploration, learning, and work free from bias and harassment, thereby improving the growth and development of each member of the community.

- **Religious accommodation policy**

UNC Charlotte provides reasonable accommodations, including a minimum of two excused absences each academic year, for religious observances required by a student’s religious practice or belief. Such reasonable accommodations must be requested in accordance with the procedures in this Policy, and include the opportunity for the student to make up any tests or other work missed due to an excused absence for a religious observance. Students wishing to request a religious accommodation may refer to the information found at <http://legal.uncc.edu/policies/ps-134.html>. It is the obligation of students to provide faculty with reasonable notice of the dates of religious observances on which they will be absent by submitting a Request for Religious Accommodation Form to their instructor prior to the census date for enrollment for a given semester (typically the 10th day of enrollment).

- **Student course evaluation process and confidentiality**

Courses at UNC Charlotte are evaluated through an online evaluation survey process. Student course evaluations provide an important source of feedback for faculty regarding course design and instructional effectiveness. The online course evaluations are administered at the end of the term, during the final two week (prior to final exams). You will receive an email announcement alerting you when the survey period opens. Periodic reminders will be sent during the time the survey is open. Please be advised that this process is secure and confidential. The technology used ensures

anonymity of participants as well as confidentiality. The University is committed to excellent instruction and student support. Please help in continuing this commitment by participating in the course evaluation process.

- **Credit hour statement**

This 3-credit course requires three hours of classroom or direct faculty instruction and six hours of out-of-class student work each week for approximately 15 weeks. Out-of-class work may include but is not limited to: required reading, library research, written assignments, and studying for quizzes and exams.

- **Brief Bio of the Instructor**

Several recent investigations seem to indicate that student perceptions of teacher competence and over-all student satisfaction with instruction increases when the instructor is formally introduced to the class on the first day. It appears that modern college students don't know that they should be impressed with your accomplishments (they don't know what they don't know, it may simply be a reflection of a societal trend to devalue formal expertise). Unless you are fortunate enough to have a colleague who can introduce you each semester, the next-best solution is to have a brief bio in the syllabus:

Professor Noah Dìà earned the BS in Curriculum and Instruction from Bemidji State University (*suma cum laude*), the MS in Urban Education from Northwestern University, and the PhD in Post-Secondary Education from The Florida State University. Dr. Dìà lectures extensively across the US and in 11 countries on the development of syllabi and course objectives. To date he has more than 40 publications in this field, and his book *A Shorter History of Syllabi* is forthcoming through American Research Publications. In his spare time, he enjoys correcting the grammar of newspapers.

### **Resources for Constructing your Syllabus**

We have prepared several resources to help you structure your syllabus. The first is a standard-paper format (saved as a Microsoft Word template) that includes all of the **REQUIRED**, **STRONGLY RECOMMENDED** and **NICE TO HAVE** components – just amend and delete.

A second version of the syllabus has been created in Moodle, and then archived here. You may simply “restore” this archive to your current course, and then amend as necessary. Thereafter, each new semester you may simply import your old course setup into the current one, and all your changes will be saved!

Additionally, the Moodle course archive contains a section of links to our UNC Charlotte’s policies and guidelines on creating syllabi, as well as links to other sample syllabi.

### **Using your new syllabus**

Having developed the greatest syllabus in the world will do absolutely no good if your students don’t interact with it. Here are some suggestions to help students to keep coming back to your masterpiece of instructional material.

On the first day of class, provide each student with your syllabus and review the sections. Do not rely upon students reading and understanding the document on their own – for some it may be the first syllabus they have encountered. Make sure to answer all of your



student's questions, and that areas of potential misunderstanding are cleared up. Once the course has started, reinforce syllabus content by referring to it in class daily. If a student asks a question in class that is covered by the syllabus – ask a student who has the syllabus to find the answer (or make it a class “race” for extra-credit!).

Another tact may be to introduce the syllabus in class as an official, graded learning activity: Divide your students into groups corresponding to the number of groups of content in your syllabus. Give each group a different section of the syllabus for review (expert groups), have each group design quiz questions for their content. Re-form the class so that each group includes a member from each of the previous expert groups. Have the experts teach their section of the syllabus to their new groups. Administer the quiz.

Moodle provides yet another excellent resource for insuring that students study the syllabus – you may designate an online syllabus quiz that must be passed prior to the remaining course content becoming available to view. The archived Moodle class has this option enabled by default – you may edit the quiz or eliminate it all together as you deem appropriate.

The following tips on making your syllabus useful and student-friendly come from The [Florida State University Instructional Handbook](#):

- Be as brief as possible. Use short sentences or lists or outlines. Don't overwhelm your students with lengthy prose – the syllabus should merely serve as a reference document and reminder to students.
- Organize the information. Outlines, tree charts, and various diagrams can help you plan before you actually write the text of your syllabus. A logical structure of the syllabus can help you make sure you have covered every important topic and help ensure that

students will be able to identify important information more easily.

- Be friendly. Use everyday words and address the student in the syllabus. For example, use “you,” “we,” and “I,” rather than “the student,” “your professor,” or “the instructor.”

- Consider the visual organization of your information as it appears on the sheet of paper.

Graphic design is not only a matter of aesthetic appeal; it has a strong bearing on the readability of any document.

- Use headings so students can easily scan it to find pertinent information.
- Highlight important information. Use capital letters, italics, and bold type or underlining. However, use them sparingly or the purpose will be lost (the student will ignore it). Also, long strings of capitalized text are less legible than using upper and lower case. The logical structure of the syllabus helps ensure that you have covered every important topic and, in the end, helps ensure that students will be able to identify important information more easily.
- Use plenty of white space. Do not put too much text on one page.
- Be neat. Avoid messiness, typos, etc. (particularly when you do not accept messiness and typos from your students).

### **Assessing your syllabus**

Now that you’ve completed your syllabus, it is time for a reality check. While you make a fresh pot of tea have a trusted colleague in your discipline read your syllabus for content and errors, or run it by the friendly folks here at [CTL](#). Another possibility is to use the excellent rubric developed by Cornell University’s Center for Teaching Excellence which is available [here](#).

Most importantly, at the end of every semester review and revise your syllabus – don't wait until the day before classes begin. Student feedback on your course evaluations will provide plenty of opportunities for you to reconsider your choices, as will the wisdom of a semester's more experience.

Good luck in your courses, and please remember that you are not alone in this task - you have a legion of supporters who are willing to help with any aspect of your journey.

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## Attendance

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### Abstract

Attendance is extremely important for success in college. Instructors are encouraged to emphasize the strong positive correlation between attendance and course performance. Class size and the type of class taught dictate the most appropriate policy to follow. This chapter is about the best practices and options that work with most classes. As always, any class attendance policy is strictly up to the professor, but this chapter includes some basic guidelines. Emphasizing the importance of attendance could be achieved in many different ways including giving incentives to students to come to class and providing opportunities to participate in group projects. As a resource to faculty, we discuss common bookkeeping techniques for large, small, and online/hybrid courses such as the use of technology, roll call, seating charts, quizzes, and in-class/group-activities. We will also explore different ways attendance can affect students' grades including rewards versus penalties, and making the attendance a percentage of the final grade.

## **Introduction**

Since attendance is extremely important for success in college, instructors are encouraged to emphasize the strong positive correlation between attendance and course performance. Absenteeism is one of the early signs that a student may be at risk in the class. Tracking attendance will provide the instructor data with which to send students early alerts. Holding the students responsible for their attendance will emphasize its importance. It is only through attending class that students are provided the opportunity to hear the instructor's insight on the material being taught. Being able to participate in and listen to group discussions and activities enriches the students' understanding and develops their ability to communicate ideas more effectively. Specific policies for attendance tracking are up to the individual instructor. However, class size and the type of class taught will dictate the most appropriate policy to follow. This chapter is about the best practices and options that work with most classes.

## **Bookkeeping**

### **Large Sections**

Attendance tracking can prove to be difficult in large section classes. Roll call is time consuming and audible responses often cannot be heard. As alternatives, many instructors use different techniques including sign-in sheets, notecards, quizzes, in-class activities, seating charts, and technology. All of these techniques, except the use of technology, will require organizing the information after each class or at the end of the semester to tally the absences. Attendance can be entered into Moodle2 so that it can become part of the students' grades.

**Sign-in sheets.** Instructors pass around a sign-in sheet or have students sign in at the door. Some do this during each class meeting and others prefer to do this randomly throughout the semester. Of course, passing around a sheet is not always reliable or verifiable; as students will ask a friend to sign for them. Standing by the door, or having a preceptor stand by the door, as students sign in will make this method more reliable. Not knowing when the sheet will be passed around or having them sign out as they leave could possibly help ensure the student staying for the entire class.

**Notecards.** Instructors require students to bring in signed notecards to class. A notecard is collected from each student either when he/she enters or exits the room. Preceptors can help in this effort. When using this method, it will be important that a uniform sized card is required for organization. This method is more reliable than the sign-in sheet method due to the personal contact between the student and the instructor/preceptor.

**Quizzes/in-class activities.** Instructors give quizzes or have graded in-class activities to take the place of a sign-in sheet. A small, short answer or multiple-choice question on a topic discussed during the lecture can be projected and students can submit their answers. Making the student copy the question down as well as the response and showing work where appropriate, can prevent students from turning in multiple submissions. In-class activities, such as creating ten minute journal entries on a particular topic presented during the lecture, are also effective in tracking attendance.

**Seating charts.** Instructors have had success keeping track of attendance in large sections using a seating chart. One of the drawbacks to this method is the time spent initially in making the chart. Another drawback is the difficulty in determining which seat is empty if the

section meets in an auditorium style room. To help with this, the seating chart can be passed around as a sheet or in several sections for students to sign. A preceptor can also be used to mark the empty seats during the class period.

**Technology.** Instructors use technology to track students' attendance. The use of clickers will require students to purchase a clicker if they do not already have one. Using a barcode scanner or the AccuClass app for iPhone will result in an initial cost to the instructor or department. There will be an account fee each year for using the iPhone app, while there is a one-time cost for the barcode scanner. When using technology to track attendance, it will be up to the students to bring their clicker or their student IDs to every class.

**Clickers.** Instructors use clickers to track attendance by asking students to answer short answer questions during the lecture. Instructors can also project a four digit lecture code on the screen and require the students to enter the code. The results can then be uploaded to Moodle2 so that it can become part of the students' grades. With this technology, reliability can still be an issue if students bring their own clicker as well as a friend's.

**AccuClass app.** Apple has a free attendance taking app for iPhone and iPad. However, instructors will also need an account for the cloud-based AccuClass database software. The first semester of enrollment is free. After that, the fee will be around \$49 per year. Institution rates can be given if an entire department wants to enroll. To use the app, instructors use the built-in camera to read the barcode on the students' ID card. There is also an optional magnetic strip reader that attaches to the apple device to allow students to swipe their IDs as they enter. The price for this device runs around \$79 - \$89.

**Barcode scanners.** Instructors use barcode scanners to track attendance. All student ID's have a barcode representing their ID number. The instructor can scan the ID's as the students enter and/or exit the classroom. The scans will be directly entered into an Excel spreadsheet if using a corded scanner or can then be uploaded later when using a cordless batch type scanner. Scanners can be purchased by the individual instructor or by the departments for as little as \$20 - \$25. Excel has the capability to match the barcode scans with the student ID numbers. The instructor can have a zero entered if a match cannot be found and any other notation if a match is found. The personal contact required between the student and instructor will make this technique more reliable.

### **Small Sections**

Attendance tracking in small sections is just as important as it is in larger ones. Due to the smaller number of students taking attendance, it will be a much easier task. The same methods discussed for the larger sections can be implemented, or an actual roll call can be used. This method allows for faculty to familiarize themselves with their students, which can help establish a rapport.

### **Online/Hybrid Sections**

Attendance tracking in the nontraditional online or hybrid section is just as important as it is in the traditional face-to-face section. However, the attendance requirements will be different. Instead of making a physical appearance, students should be required to make a digital appearance.

**Online.** Attendance/participation tracking for online sections can be achieved in several ways. It is advised that the instructor specify the online activities that will be used for this

purpose. Of course, these activities differ from one type of course to another. Some examples of these activities include:

- Students participating in an online discussion in a chatroom or using the “Forum” feature in Moodle
- Students logging in and visiting required course content regularly
- Students attempting 50% or more problems in an online assignment
- Students taking short quizzes at the end of each session to ensure that the student went over the content of that session
- Posting graded activities such as assignments or quizzes that are only available/unlocked after reading a file or watching a video
- Using the attendance activity in Moodle that enables instructors to take attendance and students to view their own attendance/participation records

**Hybrid.** Hybrid courses combine the face-to-face contact of a traditional course with the “at home” convenience of an online course. Attendance can be taken on the days students are required to be on campus. Refer to the sections on attendance tracking in large section classes for suggested methods. Participation grades can also be given using some of the suggestions listed in the online section.

### **Ways Attendance Can Affect Grades**

There are many ideas about how to encourage students to come to class. Relating the statistics about the correlation between attendance and grades is always a good idea, but it does not “motivate” most students to attend the class. Connecting attendance to either a “reward” or “penalty” seems to be the best motivating factor.

**Reward**

Some professors prefer the “rewards” factor by giving bonus (extra credit) points on a student’s test average or overall average grade for having no or at most one or two absences (excused or unexcused). Another way to give students bonus points is by focusing on attendance by a student’s participation. Depending on the type of class and how the class is structured, the instructor chooses the technique that works for the class. This leads to the question, how much should this extra credit for attendance or class participation be worth? This of course is dependent on the style of class and the professor; however, the key is to get the majority of students to come to class.

**Penalty**

Another way of motivating students to attend class is by making attendance mandatory, and linking point deduction on their grade due to lack of attendance. For example a professor may state in his/her syllabus:

If you have more than 4 absences (excused or unexcused), your grade for the class will be lowered by a letter grade, and if you have more than 6 absences - you will fail and have to repeat the class! You are expected to be on time and stay until the end of every class. Arriving late or leaving early will be counted as an absence.

When attaching “penalties” to attendance, the professor must be mindful of “special circumstances” like the death of a family member or major illness. It is a good idea to make sure that the students are aware of the proper procedure in these instances, namely, that they should contact the Dean of Students’ Office. That office in turn verifies the particular hardship and emails the instructors.

### Combination Reward/Penalty

Students who attend are rewarded while students who do not are penalized. To accomplish this, the number of days the student attends, divided by the number of total days, less the number of absences allowed is used as a multiplying factor to the student's grade. For example: If you take attendance 30 times during the semester and allow students to have two absences, the student's average will be multiplied by the number of days they attended divided by 28.

$$\text{The Multiplying Factor} = \frac{\text{Number of Days attended}}{\text{Total Number of Lectures} - \text{Number of Allowed Absences}}$$

$$\text{The Multiplying Factor is } \begin{cases} > 1 & \text{if a student missed 0 or 1 lecture} \\ = 1 & \text{if a student missed 2 lectures} \\ < 1 & \text{if a student missed more than 2 lectures} \end{cases}$$

So, the number that you multiply the student average by will either be greater than one, equal to one, or less than one. Multiplying by a number bigger than one will reward the student who is there more than the required number of days by adding points to his average. Multiplying by a number less than one will penalize the student who misses more than the allowed number of days by deducting points. Finally, multiplying by a number equal to one will not add or deduct points for the student who has the number of allowed absences. In summary,

$$\text{The Multiplying Factor } \begin{cases} \text{is a reward} & \text{if a student missed 0 or 1 lecture} \\ \text{has no effect} & \text{if a student missed 2 lectures} \\ \text{is a penalty} & \text{if a student missed more than 2 lectures} \end{cases}$$

### Conclusion

There is a variety of methods for keeping track of classroom attendance. The size and type of class will dictate the most appropriate method in any situation. But, no matter what technique is used for this purpose, class absences are one of the early signs that a student may



need an alert. When students are expected to attend each lecture, not only do they receive the obvious benefit of the instructor's insights and explanations, but they also receive a clear message from the university that personal responsibility for class attendance belongs to the students. This also provides them with the valuable practice of doing something they don't necessarily want to do.

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## Promoting Civility and Professionalism in the Classroom

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### Abstract

At UNC Charlotte, civility in the classroom, mutual respect, and student professionalism are expected goals. Faculty and students should work together to foster the best learning experience. Establishing classroom rules and expectations early in the course promotes civility and helps students develop professional skills. In this chapter we examine ways to encourage civility and promote professionalism in the classroom. We begin by clearly defining classroom civility and introduce faculty to the philosophy of civility. We then offer management strategies for faculty to build into their curriculum and encourage in everyday classroom practices. Campus resources are also offered to assist faculty who need to be aware of the potential, and management of, threatening behaviors. Promoting professional behavior is also discussed.

## Introduction

“If we can invite ourselves and our colleagues, our students, staff and administration to participate fully in this community of learning, learning to acknowledge and value all the different ways of contributing to it, then civility and common good will surely follow.” -Anya Peterson Royce

“Civility costs nothing, and buys everything.” - Mary Wortley Montagu, English writer

Part of UNC Charlotte’s Vision and Values statement articulates a commitment to equip students with “ethical principles” and “professional skills.” Encouraging civil behavior and promoting professional skill development in our classes are important ways faculty can help fulfill this vision. From a variety of perspectives, civility is seen as a key component of a successful community. Most instructors would agree that civility is essential to a positive learning environment, although faculty may differ in what they perceive as uncivil behavior. By setting clear guidelines, faculty can play an active role in promoting civility among students and discouraging negative behavior. In addition to enhancing the learning environment, promoting civility will also help our students develop professional skills that employers value. Indeed, recent studies and government reports highlight the array of interpersonal and “soft skills” (i.e., professional skills) that employers hope college graduates will possess. In this chapter, we build on the [University Mission Statement](#) by providing practical tools and resources for promoting civility, managing incivility in the classroom, and helping students develop professional skills.

### Defining Civility in the Classroom

Simply defined, civility is polite and courteous behavior within social situations. It requires individuals to be patient, attentive, and to observe the agreed-upon rules of social exchange. However, civility is much more than a simple definition. Professor P.M. Forni, co-founder of the Johns Hopkins Civility Project, describes civility in this way:

“Civility means a great deal more than just being nice to one another. It is complex and encompasses learning how to connect successfully and live well with others, developing thoughtfulness, and fostering effective self-expression and communication. Civility includes courtesy, politeness, mutual respect, fairness, good manners, as well as a matter of good health.” (P.M. Forni, *Choosing Civility*)

College instructors will agree that civility in the classroom is key for a successful learning experience. However, complete consensus as to what civility looks like in the classroom is a complex matter. A recent survey of faculty at Indiana University, for example, found that few faculty see chewing gum in class as “always” uncivil (5 percent) and nearly all faculty (over 95 percent) see harassing comments or threats of physical harm as “always” uncivil. Responses are much more mixed, however, when it comes to whether sleeping in class or arriving late constitutes uncivil behavior ([Center for Survey Research 2000](#)). As a result, it is important that faculty are clear about expectations regarding classroom behavior.

Despite these variations, we have taken an approach that looks at what civility is at its very least and what civility is at its very most. From there, we have formulated a baseline that is in concordance with UNC Charlotte’s policies. This approach required careful consideration of the ways in which we define civility, a critical survey of recent literature on civility in the classroom, and consideration of real-life scenarios. From

there, we crafted classroom management strategies that stymie incivility and promote courteous and respectful exchanges within and outside the classroom.

### **A Philosophy of Civility**

The word politeness derives from the Greek word *polis* which means city. Similarly, the word civility derives from the Latin word *civis* which also means city. Both words, politeness and civility, are connected to the notion that a community's very existence, survival, and growth are dependent upon harmonious relationships between citizens, relationships which serve as positive life propagating forces.

These understandings of civic virtue are not limited to the West but can be found in one form or fashion in multiple cultures. Eastern philosophies such as Confucianism greatly stress civility as a foundational virtue for a harmonious society. Master Kongfuzi (Confucius) understood civility as the ability "To subdue oneself and return to propriety (*li*)... Look not at what is contrary to propriety; listen not to what is contrary to propriety; speak not what is contrary to propriety; make no movement that is contrary to propriety..." (*Analects* XII:1). Master Kongfuzi understood propriety as conforming to a set of standards as well as cultivating right relationships. He cited five such relationships and one was the relationship between teacher and student. Teachers have a set of responsibilities to their students and vice versa. When these responsibilities are met, harmony ensues and spills into the greater society.

Indigenous societies also stress the importance of mutually respectful relationships between all persons within a community. Each society has created unique codes of conduct that aim to sustain reciprocity and balance within the community.

However, the common thread within indigenous lifeways is an insistence that each person within a community has value, power and place, and clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Adherence to those roles and responsibilities keeps chaos at bay. The Navajo concept of *hozho* illustrates this belief: *Hozho* translates as the “beauty way” but it also means the order of the cosmos, peace, balance, and wellbeing. *Hozho* also requires a person to be part of the world outside one’s own self by appropriately linking the self to community. To walk in *hozho* is possible only when people show the appropriate forms of respect to each other and in this way maintain the balance of the universe. The alternative to *hozho* is *hocxho*, which means the “ugly way.” *Hocxho* manifests itself in various forms of chaos when relationships are not properly respected. As we can see, civility is a perennial concern, ubiquitous in cultures past and present; it remains a core component for any well-functioning community.

### **Why Do We Have Incivility in the Classroom?**

#### **Media, The “Me” Generation, and Hyper-Consumer Mentality**

Many media outlets promote or are perceived by viewers to promote uncivil behavior. In the age of Facebook, Instagram and other social media outlets which are instantly accessed with a smart phone, many people are increasingly disconnected from face-to-face interactions where politeness is always crucial for appropriate engagement.

#### **Boredom**

The average student will begin to lose focus and attention after about twenty minutes of lecture. Breaking up lecture material with short class activities can make all the difference as to whether you will lose this student for the remainder of the class.

Class activities can also deepen student engagement and in that way re-direct the student back into a lecture once it is resumed.

### **Subject-Object Relationship Between Instructor and Student**

Instructors often present themselves as the subject (the one doing something, as in lecturing) and perceive students as objects (those being lectured to). Although no one in the classroom may be fully aware of this presentation and perception, the effects can be palpable. Students can easily sink into the role of a passive object and not feel connected to the class. This lack of connection may contribute to instances of incivility. A class that promotes the agency and value of everyone in the class may be better protected against rude behaviors. Using an active learning, team-based approach creates interconnected relationships where the subject-object role is interchanged.

### **Instructor Rudeness and Apathy**

Let's face it: sometimes instructors answer student rudeness with a rudeness of their own. It is imperative for instructors to model civil behavior. At other times, instructors may find themselves discouraged with the direction of their classes and may inadvertently project apathy towards students and even about their class material. For a variety of reasons, most, if not all, instructors at some point will feel jaded or unenthusiastic with the classroom experience. It is important for instructors to self-reflect and re-group on a periodic basis.

### **Lack of Clear Directives**

When students are not clear about what is expected of them, their frustration may manifest into uncivil behavior. Instructors also lose credibility when directions for



assignments are unclear. Faculty should be mindful that directions that make perfect sense to them may not translate successfully to students.

### **Strategies to Prevent and Manage Incivility**

#### **Prevention Strategies**

**Familiarize yourself with UNC Charlotte’s classroom policies.** There are a variety of resources on campus, including documents from UNC Charlotte’s Legal Office, that address issues related to classroom management and student conduct. The list below includes some of these resources.

- [Civility in the Classroom: Practical Advice for Faculty Members ...](#)
- [Basic Legal Guidelines for Setting Classroom Policies | Office of ...](#)
- [Classroom Policies and Practices | Office of Legal Affairs | UNC ...](#)
- [Guidance on the Enforceability of Classroom Policies and Practices ...](#)
- [Relevant Cases on Academic Freedom in the Classroom | Office of ...](#)

**Introduce the importance of civility during the first days of class.** Let students know that the UNC Charlotte community also understands the importance of civic virtue. In terms of promoting civil and ethical behavior, the Dean of Students Office defines the characteristics of a “[Noble Niner.](#)” This list of virtues was created by UNC Charlotte students to promote a culture of integrity. Faculty might consider how they can encourage students to develop and exhibit integrity, respect, accountability, compassion, etc. In particular, modeling such behavior for new college students and helping them aspire to these standards is an important part of new student induction.

**Explicitly establish roles and ground rules on the first days.** Let students know what types of behaviors they are expected to exhibit. Be specific and create documents or tip sheets that they can reference on Moodle and within the syllabus. Likewise, let them know what they can expect from you. The UNC Charlotte Legal Department has created a number of [Suggested Standard Syllabus Policies](#) to include in your syllabus. They are statements on a wide variety of classroom expectations and behaviors on the part of instructors and students alike. Included are policies that address tardiness, notification of class expectations, prevention of mobile device misconduct, mutual respect, the integrity code, etc. Each policy opens with a statement of a position endorsed by UNC Charlotte on the requisite topic and then outlines possible consequences for violations of the policy. Adopt or adapt the appropriate policies for your class and share them with students through the syllabus and your Moodle page. Also check with your own college or department about specific policies and practices they endorse. Many, such as the College of Education, offer specific guides which are available online. Be sure to highlight the policies you choose during the first days of class.

**Provide students with real life examples of unacceptable behavior.** Give students real life examples of incivility and share with them how you have dealt with such situations in the past. This way, they will know that you are serious about appropriately dealing with incivility without having to find out first hand. You may also include a sense of how civil behavior may be rewarded.

**Model civil behavior.** Show students what civility looks like through your own behaviors.

**Implement active learning, team-based approaches and diversity within the curriculum.** Keep students interested and engaged with a diverse curriculum and an active learning, team-based style of teaching. Diversity and team activities will foster a sense of inclusion and class community and curb student boredom. The Center for Teaching and Learning offers periodic workshops and seminars and a host of printed materials that help instructors re-craft their class pedagogy.

### **Management Strategies**

**Know how to effectively deal with classroom disruptions.** UNC Charlotte offers a [Classroom Disruption tip sheet](#) that inventories disruptive behaviors and groups them into three levels of seriousness. This classroom disruption flier also provides instructors with advice about responding to the disruptions as well as the directive to document such events. Although the tip sheet is for instructors, sharing it with students may impress the seriousness of incivility upon students as well as the consequences of such behaviors. Knowing that instructors are expected to document student disruptions will also discourage incivility.

**Use non-verbal cues.** With certain uncivil behaviors (e.g., side conversations, use of cell phones) a non-verbal cue may be enough to arrest the situation without disrupting the class. Establishing eye-contact, standing next to the offending student(s), or pausing the lecture or activity may be all the situation requires.

**Use verbal cues.** When non-verbal cues fail, quickly and patiently say something. Keep an even tone, free of anger, and ask the student(s) to desist from the disruptive behavior. You may remind them of the importance of civility in the classroom. Keep your comment short and move on. If the behavior continues, ask the students to leave. You may add that they will not be allowed to return to class until they meet with you during office hours for a conversation.

**Be consistent and follow through.** Without consistency and follow through, you will lose credibility. Students will assume that you are not serious and will push boundaries. If you keep letting negative behaviors slide, you may find yourself imploding when you reach an internal breaking point. By taking control at the onset of uncivil behaviors you will be better prepared to respond with patience and civility. UNC Charlotte offers examples of scenarios that you may encounter while managing incivility here: [Managing Incivility: 10 Video Scenarios](#).

**Do not take it personally.** Most of the time, uncivil behavior on the part of students is not about you. Taking things personally may inspire resentment and bitterness within yourself which will make modeling civil behavior more difficult. If you believe certain behaviors have personal intentions, simply ask to speak with the student during your office hours. Patiently ask the student if they have a problem with you as an instructor. If they respond in the affirmative then engage the student in a conversation about their perception of you. Assess whether or not their problem is legitimate and whether or not changes can be made to accommodate the student's perceptions. Point out that instead of personal attacks, a conversation during office hours is more

productive. If they respond in the negative then specifically point out why their behavior was construed as a personal attack. Have a conversation about the situation. Most reasonable students will understand that they will need to engage in civil behavior if they expect to remain and succeed in a class, especially after a conversation with their instructor.

**Encourage student emotional and physical well being.** Students that consistently act out in class may be manifesting serious emotional or physical problems. If you are able to gauge that a student may be experiencing such problems, you may want to ask the student after class if everything is okay. If they reveal that they are experiencing real personal problems, direct them to the Counseling Center and let them know that counseling can make a world of difference. You are not expected to provide counseling and may not be qualified to offer such help. Simply leave it to the professionals. At the very least, the student will know that you have a genuine concern for their wellbeing. Knowing this may encourage more respectful exchanges in class with you and fellow students.

**Be mindful of your wellbeing.** At the same time, you may be experiencing personal problems. Be mindful of your own humanity and the possibility of unintentionally projecting your own problems within the class. UNC Charlotte offers an [Employee Assistance Program](#) with counseling possibilities as well as resources for personal problems through the [UNC Charlotte Counseling Center](#).

**Promote and participate in UNC Charlotte's Civility Week.** Beyond discouraging harassment and other negative behaviors, faculty can play a role in promoting civility

among students. Participating in campus events related to [UNC Charlotte Civility Week](#), sponsored by the Multicultural Resource Center, may be especially beneficial for new college students. In addition to Civility Week, the Multicultural Resource Center has other resources that promote understanding across the types of social differences that often contribute to incivility on campus and in the classroom

### **Management Strategies for Common Uncivil Scenarios**

**Silence side conversations.** Immediately let the offending students know that the behavior will not be tolerated through non-verbal cues. Looking directly at the students may be all that you need to do. If not, using "the Look" that many of us remember from our childhood may do the trick. "The Look" is often accompanied by a sigh, a period of silence, and crossed arms. Walking towards the students and standing next to them may also be an option if you can easily move around in the classroom. When non-verbal cues do not work, take a breath (or a few breaths) if your heart rate begins to increase. It is essential that you stay in control and politely let the students know that you and the rest of class would appreciate it if they stopped talking out of turn.

**Disallow abuse of communication devices.** Politely tell the student to put away the mobile device. If the same student continues to inappropriately use the mobile device, gently let the student know that you will have to jot their name down and start a tally of how many infractions they incur through out the semester. A set number of infractions may result in a loss of participation points.

**Discourage sleeping in class.** If sleeping in class bothers you, then gently wake the student. You may allow the student to leave the room, to grab a coffee or other caffeinated beverage, or to visit the bathroom to freshen up with a splash of water on the face. The embarrassment from being woken up may stymie future episodes. If it becomes a continual problem, you may let the student know that consistent sleeping will result in the loss of participation points.

**Address consistent tardiness.** Simply ask the student why they are consistently late. The top two reasons will be a long commute and trouble waking up in the morning. Despite the fact that the solutions to these problems are obvious, offer them to the student. You may respond with a measure of sympathy (without sarcasm) and then the solution: "It seems that the only way to get here on time is to leave your home earlier" or "You may want to consider going to bed earlier or changing certain aspects of your lifestyle that may cause difficulty with waking up." Hearing the solutions verbalized may have an actual effect on student behavior. At the very least, the student knows that you have taken notice of their lateness. You may also point out that this kind of tardiness may result in the loss of participation points.

**Prohibit profanity.** As a general rule of thumb, it is best to disallow profanity within the classroom. Some instructors may allow it since we are all adults in the classroom. The fact of the matter is that many adults find profanity to be offensive. Furthermore, allowing profanity within discussions may signal to students a lack of boundaries within the class and serve as a gateway for a whole host of other incivilities.

**Effectively cease offensive language and comments.** Many times students inadvertently say things or use words without intending to cause offense. We all come from different places and some of may not be aware that things we learned or phrases that were used in the home may be offensive to others. **Do not react** but do question such comments. Explain how the comment may sound to someone else. Use the instance as a teaching moment.

If a student is intentionally belittling a specific identity (racial, ethnic, sexual orientation, etc.) ask the student to desist immediately and to see you during your office hours. Remind the student of [UNC Charlotte's statement on mutual respect](#):

"I will conduct this class in an atmosphere of mutual respect. I encourage your active participation in class discussions. Each of us may have strongly differing opinions on the various topics of class discussions. The conflict of ideas is encouraged and welcome. The orderly questioning of the ideas of others, including mine, is similarly welcome. However, I will exercise my responsibility to manage the discussions so that ideas and argument can proceed in an orderly fashion. You should expect that if your conduct during class discussions seriously disrupts the atmosphere of mutual respect I expect in this class, you will not be permitted to participate further." ([Suggested Standard Syllabus Policies | Office of Legal Affairs](#))



## **Beyond Incivility: Threatening Behaviors**

### **Communication of Threats/Sexual Harassment/Violence**

A variety of campus resources and statements clearly outline behavioral expectations for UNC Charlotte students. Faculty can play a role in helping students understand and upholding standards of conduct. At the very least, students should be aware of the [The Code of Student Responsibility](#) and understand the definition and consequences of sexual harassment as well as grievance procedures for those subject to harassing behavior. Particularly for new college students, understanding these guidelines may help them avoid making mistakes with devastating consequences.

The Counseling Center also offers an [Interpersonal Violence Resource Guide](#) that defines stalking, sexual assault and other forms of such abuse. The guide also provides assistance to victims of such acts. Finally, any threatening behaviors need to be documented and reported to the appropriate campus officials. UNC Charlotte's [Fighting Words Harassment](#) policy offers guidance in such matters. The following links have more information regarding threatening behaviors:

- [Stalking Awareness Fact Sheet | Police & Public Safety](#)
- [Sexual Harassment Policy and Grievance Procedures](#)

### **Promoting Professionalism in the Classroom**

In addition to cultivating civil behavior in the classroom, we also want students to develop professional skills that will serve them in the workplace and throughout their lives. As mentioned above, UNC Charlotte's Vision and Values Statement includes

"professional skills" as something we strive to help students acquire during their college experience.

The importance of professionalism receives considerable media attention when the Center for Professional Excellence at York College of Pennsylvania releases the results of its [National Professionalism Survey](#) each year. Based on the 2013 survey, for example, *The Wall Street Journal* reported that many new college graduates lack basic professional skills such as "appropriate appearance, punctuality, regular attendance, honesty, attentiveness and sticking with a task through completion." Many of these skills remain implicit in the college curriculum, but there are ways faculty can intentionally promote professionalism in their classes. There are a number of resources on campus that address the range of professional, or "soft," skills that will help students find and keep employment after graduation.

### **The Career Center**

The Career Center at UNC Charlotte offers a variety of services to help students connect with jobs, volunteer opportunities and internships. Helping students become acquainted with those services is an important part of new student induction. In addition, the Career Center offers workshops aimed at developing skills that will enable students to demonstrate professionalism as they transition to graduate school or the labor force. The Career Center maintains a [blog](#) that addresses a variety of employment issues. One blog post directly addressed the [professional skills that employers desire from our graduates](#). Among the most important are the communication skills—

speaking, listening, and writing—that our courses routinely cultivate, but key professional competencies also include:

- Teamwork skills
- Interpersonal skills (i.e., able to get along with others)
- Work ethic
- Time management
- Skills in multitasking
- Ability to meet deadlines
- Professional/business etiquette
- Problem-solving skills
- Ability to teach/train others
- Professional attitude and demeanor
- Analytical skills

Many of the professional skills on the list include things that are a routine part of the classes faculty teach. Helping students see how their course work is connected to skills that future employers value may motivate students to develop those skills in college.

### **Additional Resources**

There are many resources available to help students think about the types of skills they will need on a job. In addition to the University Career Center, some colleges on campus offer additional career services to their majors. Some professional associations also provide information about the skills college graduates should focus on developing. For example, the [Association for Psychological Science](#) lists skills such as:

- Monitoring one's own emotional expressions and responsiveness (e.g., showing interest in and motivation toward the task at hand)
- Maintaining composure when challenged
- Speaking and writing in a manner appropriate to the audience (e.g., different levels of formality in different contexts)
- Being receptive to feedback and constructive criticism (e.g., a willingness to learn and improve)
- Being aware of personal responsibility as a listener or audience member
- Respecting others' professional position, particularly those in authority (e.g., referencing people formally unless instructed otherwise)
- Being on time
- Being prepared for the task at hand
- Being courteous to everyone, regardless of rank or position
- Appreciating services received and expressing that appreciation
- Making proper introductions
- Dressing appropriately

Our classes can be designed to encourage students, particularly in their first year, to practice and improve on these skills. The online workshop below provides faculty with clear ideas about how to define, assess, and help students reflect on their professionalism. It offers concrete suggestions for making professionalism part of the curriculum in college courses based on the [US Secretary of Labor's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills \(SCANS\)](#).

### Helpful Publications

In addition to resources that help faculty build professional skills into their courses, there are a number of publications that target students. For example, Staley and Staley's (2015) *Focus on College and Career Success* encourages students to focus on the professional skills they can develop during college rather than viewing it simply as a hurdle to clear on the road to their future careers. In the book, they focus on ten things that employers hope students will learn during college (Staley 2015: 322-324):

- Develop reliability, diligence, and consistency *today*.
- Make knowledgeable decisions.
- Develop a problem-solving mindset.
- Polish your communication skills.
- Be a team player.
- Follow the “unwritten rules” as well as the official ones.
- Respect those research skills you’re learning.
- Maintain your math skills, too.
- Be willing to go the extra mile.
- Develop discipline.

### Conclusion

As we have discussed, civility in the classroom is of the utmost importance for encouraging a healthy, peaceful learning environment for students. By utilizing the available resources, faculty can do their part to ensure that students understand the importance of civility in the classroom. Instructors can also examine themselves and

their curriculum to determine how they can better promote civility and professionalism in the classroom and in UNC Charlotte's community.

#### References

Staley, Constance. 2015. *Focus on College Success* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). Wadsworth Publishing.

## Time on Task

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### Introduction

In this chapter, we aim to help students realize the need to determine and manage the way they spend their time. We provide guidelines on how faculty might help students to organize their tasks, estimate the time required to complete it, and balance academic needs with their personal lives.

What is it? The phrase “time on task” has traditionally referred to pedagogy, as in, “Faculty provide focused time for students to practice skills they are acquiring, through assignments in class, with the intention that time on task is critical to learning. Faculty may also help student understand that practice is critical to learning a new skill.”

In this chapter, we take a broader view of time on task as time management and productivity. The core idea is to encourage the students to think of all their tasks that they engage in throughout the week such as: course work, outside work, hobbies, social time, personal time, and day-to-day chores. We would then periodically remind students to budget their time between these activities, taking care to estimate the time that each would require. The notion of productivity could be introduced where the goal is to get the maximum amount of work done in as little time as possible. We gently remind the students that planning their time is a key component in achieving this productivity.

Specifically with respect to the courses we teach, we would provide estimates on how much time each of the tasks we assign would take. Faculty have an obligation, particularly with novice students, to provide guidelines as to the number of “course credit workloads” that are expected on

average from students in their class. This information should be clearly stated in the course syllabus and explained at the beginning of the semester so that students understand the expectations for work in and out of the classroom. Below is a sample syllabus statement for a single credit course.

## Syllabus statement

### Course Credit Workload

[FOR A DIDACTIC CLASS] This [NUMBER OF CREDIT HOURS FOR COURSE]-credit course requires [NUMBER OF CREDIT HOURS FOR COURSE] hours of classroom or direct faculty instruction and [NUMBER OF CREDIT HOURS FOR COURSE X 2] hours of out-of-class student work each week for approximately 15 weeks. Out-of-class work may include but is not limited to: [REQUIRED READING, LIBRARY RESEARCH, STUDIO WORK, PRACTICA, INTERNSHIPS, WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS, AND STUDYING FOR QUIZZES AND EXAMS].

[FOR A LAB CLASS] This [NUMBER OF CREDIT HOURS FOR COURSE]-credit lab requires [REFER TO: <http://www.lavc.edu/vccc/documents/carnegieunits.html>] hours of direct faculty instruction and [REFER TO: <http://www.lavc.edu/vccc/documents/carnegieunits.html>] hours of out-of-class student work each week for approximately 15 weeks. Out-of-class work may include but is not limited to: [REQUIRED READING, LIBRARY RESEARCH, WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS, AND STUDYING FOR QUIZZES AND EXAMS].

#### EXAMPLE: 1 CREDIT COURSE

"This 1-credit course requires one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and two hours of out-of-class student work each week for approximately 15 weeks. Out-of-class work may include but is not limited to: required reading, library research, written assignments, and studying for quizzes and exams."

#### EXAMPLE: LAB WITHOUT HOMEWORK

"This 1-credit lab requires three hours of direct faculty instruction for approximately 15 weeks."

#### EXAMPLE: LAB WITH HOMEWORK

"This 1-credit lab requires two hours of direct faculty instruction and one hour of out-of-class student work each week for approximately 15 weeks. Out-of-class work may include but is not limited to: required reading, library research, written assignments, and studying for quizzes and exams."



**Tips on getting students to think about productivity**

Many students have the notion that putting in large number of hours should automatically result in a better performance on the course. Quite often students cite the number of hours they have put in studying for the test or working on an assignment as justification for why they should be given a better grade. For example, pulling “all-nighters” are considered to be a badge of honor.

Students should be made to realize that rather than the number of hours spent on the task, the metric they should focus on is the percentage of task completed and the hourly productivity. Judging how well a metric is achieved depends on the ability to quantify it. Unfortunately, unlike the total number of hours spent which can easily be tracked with a wall clock, both percentages of tasks completed and hourly productivity are much harder to quantify. In what follows below is our view on how we can help students to quantify the two metrics.

With regard to percentage of tasks completed, students should be able to take their tasks, such as homework and studying for tests, and break it down into subcomponents. An estimate amount of the time required to complete the subtasks needs to be made to plan the total amount of time to be allocated to the task. The student should then keep track of the percentage of task completed in terms of the number of sub-tasks completed. Faculty could help students in this regard by organizing assignments into sub-assignments and by providing estimates of typical times taken to complete these.

In the simplest terms, productivity can be quantified by measuring the total number of sub-tasks done per unit of time (hours, days, weeks etc.) assuming that the individual’s sub-tasks roughly take the same amount of work. The goal of the student should be to maximize the productivity by doing the tasks in the shortest time possible. One of the key requirements in achieving this goal is to start the tasks in a rested state of mind, keeping strict track of the time spent on the subject. This would involve the student immersing in a single task for sustained periods of, say, 30 to 50 minutes. To keep a good handle on the time spent, the start and stop time for each task could be maintained in a cloud based

spreadsheet (for example, Google Docs) that can be accessed anytime and anywhere. This would allow the student to clearly see the number of hours spend on the task, calculate the productivity, and compare their performance to the estimated time required for the task.

The embedded video provides shares additional experiences of one of the authors:

## Late Work and Late Adds

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### Abstract

This chapter examines the choice of course policies concerning the acceptance of late student work. It is not intended to be a comprehensive discussion of the topic; the number of different policies concerning late work is likely as numerous as there are instructors. However, it is meant to introduce new faculty to different policies and philosophies and give faculty some things to consider when crafting their course policies.

### **Purpose of a Late Work Policy**

Like much of what you do when constructing courses and curricula, the choice of a late work policy requires balancing several criteria.

- How to deliver course material
- How to consider student needs and circumstances
- How to prepare students for future education and careers
- How to assign grades to accurately reflect mastery
- How to value time spent on grading and assessment

When choosing a policy, you should consider each of these criteria and strive for a policy that takes them into consideration. The chosen balance among these priorities will likely change given the circumstances of each course. What works for large, introductory lecture courses may not work for a small, upper-division seminar and vice versa. Furthermore, even within a particular course the policy may vary with the type of assignment; for example, a brief, low-stakes assignment in class or for homework may not be accepted late whereas a major term paper may be treated with more flexibility. It is likely you will have different late policies for different situations and we encourage you to think carefully about how policies fit into the context of each particular course and the purpose of each assignment.

One consideration to keep in mind is that a liberal education involves teaching student's skills and habits beyond those specific to individual disciplines. Policies on late work serve the purpose of teaching students about time management and understanding how to meet deadlines, two skills that are critical to a successful career in any field. However, consideration

should be made that the flexibility of deadlines differs across professions or careers and course policies that are too strict or too lenient may not be reflective of a student's future.

### **General Recommendations**

Whatever policy you choose should reflect the general pedagogy of your course. Your policy should be fairly applicable to everyone in the course and should take into consideration typical student situations. You should strive to ensure fairness in how policies are applied, and you should keep in mind that when you make policy exceptions for one student those exceptions may need to be extended to all students.

On occasion you may have students in your classes who have accommodations from the Disability Services Office on campus requiring specific learning conditions. These conditions range from being absent from class to requiring extra time for assignments. They might also allow students to turn in assignments outside of your standard course policy. In these situations consult the Office of Disability Services about the student's particular accommodation to determine what is required of you and how their accommodation affects course policy.

No matter what your course policy on late work is all students should have access to the assignments. Access to the assignment and/or answers even if the student is not allowed to turn in the assignment for credit is an important opportunity for learning. If students are being punished for their lack of preparation by not being given credit for the assignment denying them access to the assignment equates to a second form of punishment, one that conflicts with our educational mission.

It is important that faculty communicate their policies on late work early in the semester. This is frequently done on the first day of the course during a discussion of the

syllabus and general course policies. The first day of the semester is a hectic day particularly for first semester freshman. Students are acclimating to new classes and new faculty and potentially new living conditions. They are being bombarded with new information in the span of a few days and it is not unreasonable to think they will not absorb all of the unique policy details from each of their courses. Because of this, it is advisable for faculty to repeat their late policies immediately before the first assignment. In addition to communicating the details of the course's late policy, you should make an effort to explain why the course has the particular policy you have chosen. Students are much more likely to accept a policy if they understand the reasons behind the policy and if they can see how it fits within the context of the course. Without this explanation students are likely to view the refusal to accept late work as capricious or an attempt by the instructor to do less work.

### **Range of Late Work Policies**

Instructors should not feel bound to using one particular policy in all their courses. In fact, instructors are encouraged to tailor late policies to the individual circumstances of each course. Below you will find different examples of policies and why each might be used.

#### **Draconian**

This policy prohibits students from turning in any late work. The decision not to accept any late work is often employed in larger courses to control the extra work placed on you and to prevent students from turning in copied work. If you choose this policy it is imperative to communicate the reasons for this policy to students early in the semester before assignments are due. Students frequently see the inability to turn in work late as an overly strict policy, and

unless students understand the purpose of such a policy they may come to resent the restriction.

### **Valid Excuses**

Similar to the draconian, this policy allows you to accept late work only with a valid excuse and under unusual circumstances. What constitutes as a valid excuse varies among instructors but some of the most common accepted excuses range from a significant illness to a family emergency. It is common to require documentation of the excuse, such as a doctor's note, before accepting it.

One excuse, which is often a point of contention between faculty and students, is when students miss class or deadlines due to work. Many faculty members feel students are responsible for managing academic and work schedules effectively and will not accept obligations to a job as a valid excuse for a late assignment. UNC Charlotte has a significant number of students who spend much of the week working, often 40 hours or more, in addition to attending school. For many of these students the ability to pay for and attend school depends upon the ability to work these long hours. We do not suggest you should determine late work or any course policies based upon the non-scholastic schedules of a portion of your students but we do believe you should keep these facts in mind when creating course policies.

### **Until Graded and Returned**

This policy option serves to prevent cheating but is more flexible than many of the others described by allowing students to submit assignments after the due date until you have graded and returned the assignment to the other students in the class. In this way students submitting late work do not have access to graded material to finish the assignment but still

have the opportunity to submit work. This type of policy is well suited to a larger course where it is difficult to control copying of assignments due to the large number of assignments graded.

### **Points for Student Time**

One common policy for late work cited by faculty involves deducting a certain number of points or a percentage of a grade from an assignment that is turned in late. This may be the most common policy among faculty because it allows students some flexibility but still imposes a punishment for late work. Some of the cited policies have a single deduction for any late work regardless of how late the work is, while others have a sliding scale of deductions based upon when the work is submitted. The most common scale involves a regular deduction (often one letter-grade) for each day that the assignment is late and a point in time at which no credit can be received for the assignment.

An alternative to a grade-based penalty is the denial of some other benefit the student might get for turning work on time. For example, you might accept a late paper and grade it without penalty but not provide any other feedback to the student about the work. Such a policy gives the student a grade that reflects mastery of the course but saves you some of the time the student has cost you. Perhaps more importantly, it helps the student to reflect on how valuable the instructor's feedback can be.

### **No Penalty**

At the opposite end of the spectrum from the draconian policy falls this lenient policy to accept late work with no penalty and without any excuses or documentation for why the work is late. This type of policy may be most appropriate in upper division courses or courses with smaller enrollments. Faculty would be advised to think carefully about implementing this type



of policy in larger, lower division courses. An absence of penalties for late work may quickly cascade into numerous assignments submitted after the due date and significant extra work for you.

### **No Policy**

Some instructors intentionally do not establish a policy for late work. The absence of a policy serves two purposes: (a) it sends the message that the instructor expects all work to be submitted on time and (b) provides the instructor with maximum flexibility for dealing with cases of lateness as they arise. Such non-policies are rare, especially among larger and introductory courses, and the instructor who uses them should be prepared to deal with a wide range of excuses that may be difficult to navigate with consistency and fairness.

### **Late Adds**

A slightly different, but related, issue concerns work a student has missed due to adding into a course after classes have begun. Because UNC Charlotte's drop/add deadline comes during the second week of each semester, it is possible students may miss up to four classes at the beginning of the semester before enrolling in the course. This situation is difficult in courses with multiple graded assignments early in the semester, as we are strongly encouraged to employ by the administration. The undergraduate and graduate catalogs both state that "students are expected...to complete all of the course requirements." We interpret this to include the assignments that occurred after the semester began and before a student added into the course.

### **Late Financial Aid**

Occasionally students will claim that their financial aid is late and they do not have the means to purchase books, software, or website accounts needed to complete graded assignments at the start of the semester. The University's Financial Aid Office does not provide formal guidance on this issue, but our sources in that office tell us that it is an exceptionally rare case that a student who completes the necessary paperwork on time does not receive the appropriate aid within the first few days of the semester. Furthermore, the Financial Aid Office offers short term loans to students while their aid is being processed.

Many publishers are willing to offer temporary access to ebooks, software, and websites for students who are shopping around for classes in the first few weeks or need a little more time to make their payments. You may find it helpful to make this point to students when discussing the syllabus on the first day of class. In short, delayed financial aid is most likely the result of a delay on the part of the student and can usually be dealt with through some fairly easy solutions.

### **Conclusion**

Every instructor at the University must make decisions about whether or not to accept late work and whether to grade late work any differently than work that was submitted on time. You have a great degree of freedom to choose the policy that suits your circumstances best, but the key to success lies in communicating both the policies and the rationale behind such policies to your students. The better prepared you are to explain a late work policy and answer questions about students' particular situations the more confidence students will have in your ability to manage and direct a course.

## Student Feedback

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### Introduction

Feedback is important to both students and instructors. It allows students the opportunity to identify what they have learned or mastered and what is yet to be learned or mastered. It allows instructors the opportunity to identify what has been mastered and what needs further instruction and attention. Feedback comes in many forms from grades on assignments to comments in the classroom. Feedback can encompass all components of the education setting from course content mastery to student success as a college student and member of society. It can be as simple as a numeric grade or as complex as a detailed analysis of students' work. The depth and breadth of feedback provided by an instructor vary depending on the course being taught, the assignment being graded, and the quality of the students' work.

Two types, or categories of feedback will be discussed: content and behavioral. Content feedback relates to the students' mastery of course content. This includes the students' process of attaining mastery as well as students' demonstration of that attainment. Behavioral feedback relates to student demeanor and conduct both as a student and as a developing professional member of the students' chosen fields.

### **Content Feedback**

Grades, the most basic form of student feedback, can be provided in written and verbal form though generally it is written on an assignment and often posted in an online grade book such as Moodle. A numeric or letter grade provides a student with his/her measured understanding of content evaluated in a particular assignment and ultimately in a completed course.

Critiques or analyses can be as brief or as detailed as necessary. The depth and breadth of this form of feedback are determined by the particulars of the assignment being evaluated. A math exam, for example, might require that a specific process be followed solving problems. When evaluating the process and not simply the result, more detailed feedback would be given. Written assignments require more detailed feedback unless the writing is done simply to state a correct response. In this case, it is either right or wrong and no further detail is necessary.

Clarity, consistency, and completeness are important when grading written work. Writing is a work-in-process and ever evolving, no matter the subject. Useful feedback fosters growth during this process. Spelling does count and so does grammar when considering the structural portion of written work. Content considerations deal with the subject of the written work. How well is the question answered or the topic addressed? Style is often a matter of taste but as long as the question is answered and it is done so using correct grammar and spelling, style can be considered secondarily.

### **Behavior Feedback**

Professionalism encompasses both competence and demeanor. As we work to develop professionals, we must consider the whole person. We share our discipline expertise but should

also serve as mentors working to grow the entire individual. Education should extend beyond the course content or subject matter. Take full advantage of teachable moments. Students come to college from varying backgrounds and often with limited understanding of the workplace or societal expectations. They are often accustomed to being allowed to submit work late or have multiple opportunities to improve on an assignment before it is graded. While this encourages completion and good grades, it does not instill a strong sense of personal responsibility, discipline, or even self-confidence. Encourage students to do their best on the first try and allow them to learn from their mistakes. Students will not think or problem-solve if we do not let them; they will not own their learning without some degree of failure.

### **Communicating Expectations & Feedback**

#### **Written**

Course expectations tell our students what they need to do in order to successfully complete our courses. These expectations need to be clearly stated and presented early, at the beginning of the semester.

Generally, expectations are listed or outlined in the course syllabus. This provides one place to which students can refer and should include at least a statement about behavioral expectations as well. If you do not want students to behave disrespectfully, for example, tell them so. Be sure to state your limits of acceptance. If profanity is not to be allowed, say so. If coming to class late is not allowed, say so. If late work is not to be accepted, say so. These are just a few examples. Each instructor's expectations will differ. What is important is that expectations be communicated, fully and early and that they be repeated or referred to as often as necessary.

Grading rubrics provide an excellent method for communicating expectations as well as a tool for providing feedback. Students can be made fully aware of the expectations of an assignment prior to beginning work on the assignment. Earned and missed points then directly correlate to the parts of the rubric making feedback clear, presenting no surprises.

Email is often the method of choice for communication employed by today's students. Whether a class is delivered online, in the classroom, or a combination of the two, an instructor's email inbox gets quite full, regularly. If you do not want to deal with this form of communication, particularly if you teach a seated or hybrid class, then make this preference (or mandate if that is the case) known to your class early in the semester. If email is acceptable or preferred, establish rules for content and parameters for managing. For example, it is a good idea to mandate that the subject line be the course letters and numbers (such as LBST 1100). If you teach multiple sections of the same course, you might mandate that the course section be included in the subject line as well. This allows you to readily identify the email as coming from one of your students and not spam. In addition, a labeled email allows you to manage filing the email when finished. (I recommend that you retain all student email indefinitely. You never know when a situation might arise that requires documentation of communication).

Feedback, in the form of email replies, is very important. This feedback includes both your response to the question, issue, or situation addressed in the email as well as directives for handling electronic communication. The prevalence of technology and the relative ease with which our students use it make it easy for students to not see the lines of formality necessary when the communication is between a teacher and student. Feedback directing, or redirecting when necessary, will serve students well when they are in the workplace later.

**Verbal**

Instructors generally hold regular office hours. These hours provide times for students to drop in to ask a question, seek clarification, or just talk about a class. These informal meetings provide excellent opportunities for students and teachers to get to know one another and build professional relationships. These meetings also provide outstanding opportunities for instructors to mentor their students and provide feedback that fosters professional excellence. Note that feedback in these settings might have nothing whatsoever to do with a student's grade or work in class but rather with the development of the person, the professional the student is striving to become.

Class time is verbal by design. We lecture; we ask questions; we respond to answers given by our students. Whether the classroom format is a traditional lecture, lab, flipped classroom, or other active learning method, generally, there is verbal communication. Whenever there is give-and-take between students and teachers, there is a form of feedback given. How we talk to our students effects learning positively or negatively. Carefully select your words, and think before you speak. Use this time to guide and nurture. This fosters learning while creating a non-threatening but constructive environment.

**Immediate Feedback**

Although clickers have been used on the UNC Charlotte campus for over a decade, its popularity among faculty has increased significantly in the last few years after the launch of the Turning Point software and its ease of integration with Moodle. A clicker is a device, about the size of a cell phone that allows students to participate in class, while having their responses/participation recorded. Clickers' responses include: simple answer, numeric, multiple

choice, True/False, or just simple participation. Clickers can also be used to collect data, poll groups, record attendance, and even to submit responses from quizzes. This makes clickers an ideal tool to promote attendance and in class participation. Some of the teaching advantages of clickers:

- Records attendance multiple times during a lecture
- Reduces the amount of grading of in-class assignments
- Provides immediate detailed feedback
- Current software (Turning Technologies) allows instructors to prepare questions for the Lecture ahead of time in a Power Point format or make up questions during lecture.

Arguably, the immediate and detailed feedback given is the most valuable property of clickers.

Turning Point allows for a variety of data and statistics about the groups' response to be displayed at the close of each question.

As in the case with clickers, self-graded quizzes or "trade and grade" quizzes can provide the same benefit to the student as it will shed light on misunderstandings, misconceptions or lack of required techniques. The disadvantage of these types of assessments is that they do not provide the same feedback to the instructor, and the grade may not be reliable enough to be calculated into the course grade, which in turn will diminish the incentive for students to fully participate.

### **Delayed Feedback**

Delayed feedback is most often provided on assignments like homework, tests, and projects, and it is a critical part of the learning process. The format of this feedback is content and situation dependent



Although courses such as Language Arts or Communication first come to mind when thinking about verbal feedback, it can be a great feedback tool in many environments. Verbal feedback has the benefit of two-way communication in which students can participate in the conversation about their feedback. In addition, it provides an opportunity for instructors to aid in the interpretation of the feedback and with follow up guidance. In situations where verbal feedback is given in groups, during class discussions or by peers, it is beneficial to other participants of the assignment for considering the feedback of others. However, it is important for instructors to remain aware of student confidentiality and to be sensitive when giving “public” feedback.

Written feedback can range from a grade being posted to a Moodle gradebook, to a detailed report provided to students. Written feedback should be given on every graded assignment. Feedback that is timely and detailed will give students the best chance at making improvement soon enough to benefit them in consequent assignments. It is important to help students understand where incorrection exists, but furthermore, to help guide them to the correct response. When topic or large course numbers make it difficult to give such detailed responses, it is recommended to provide a comprehensive rubric before the assignment and detailed solutions key in response of it to accompany the grading/feedback.

### **Issues with Feedback**

To maximize the effectiveness of feedback, it is helpful to focus on the interpretation of feedback. Feedback is often the first prompt to a student informing him/her that an adjustment is needed in the work that they are delivering. Where many students will not be satisfied with any assignment grade less than an A, others will be very content with the lowest passing grade.

It is crucial to help students understand what their grade means, their standing in the course, and what can be done. Some helpful techniques include:

- Providing a scatterplot with all of the grade data points for a particular assignment or course average to give students an idea of the percentile that they fall within. For instance, a student whom received – and was content with a grade of 73% on an assignment may feel differently if he/she realizes that it is the second lowest grade in the class, or that the class average was 91%.
- Creating and distributing a chart with feedback for students whom fall in certain categories, for example, all grades on a test that are on the interval.
  - 60 – 69% will receive a message, “This is not a passing grade. Please consider making use of the tutorial center or SI sessions.”
  - Less than 60% will receive a message, “This is not a passing grade. Please make an appointment with your instructor so that we can work out a recovery plan for you.”

Be prepared to assist students with an action plan to get back on track. Most departments have recourses set to assist students to receive extra help. In addition, the UCAE (University Center for Academic Excellence) provides tutoring assistance. In the event that it appears that the students may not be able to salvage his/her grade during the current semester, the student may be advised about his/her withdrawal options.

It is common for freshmen students to have preconceived expectations of feedback. Often, the expectation will be that feedback at the college level will similar to what they have received in high school. Thus, it is important for instructors to communicate the details of feedback in any given course, with specific emphasis on reminding students of their own

responsibility in accessing feedback. It is a good idea to remind students to keep a list of their own grades throughout the semester, frequently check the Moodle gradebook, and to consult with their instructor when needed.

FERPA, (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act), enacted in 1974, serves to protect the confidential handling of students' information, including grades and feedback, and, "The primary purpose of FERPA is to protect the privacy of student information, and this protection is achieved by controlling access to and disclosure of students' "education records," as that term is defined in FERPA" (<http://legal.uncc.edu/legal-topics/ferpa/introduction-ferpa>).

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## Early Alert: A Guide to Best Practices

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### Abstract

Early alert is a program designed to flag students who are unprepared for rigorous college-level work. Due to numerous pilot programs implemented by various colleges and universities nationwide, studies have shown that the early warning system can raise pass rates for freshman classes and ultimately improve graduation rates. This chapter provides an overview of what a well-functioning early alert system looks like, how instructors can plan to implement one into their own classes, and the steps UNC Charlotte is taking to create a campus-wide approach through the adoption of Starfish®.

## **Introduction**

Early alert is a formal, proactive program designed to identify students who display problems in class and to direct those students to campus resources which can positively affect their retention and success in the class. Ideally, the program will be come at the end of the first month of classes and flag students who display problematic behaviors in basic skills. Crucially, these students should then be directed to programs which help with student retention and skill formation. When properly implemented, Early Alert will identify students who lack basic preparation for collegiate-level success and direct them to resources that can help form those skills. Early alert is not a tool to punish bad students, but rather an opportunity to reach out to students who have not been given the tools necessary for success.

## **Goals and Purposes of the Program**

As college enrollment rates have climbed over the past two decades, retention rates have fallen (Mortenson 2005). The reasons for the drop are multifaceted, but one is the lack of preparation for the classroom experience. Students do not have the skills, both technical and abstract, to succeed in college. While remedial classes are an option for the 70% who need them, study skills are not typically addressed in the same way (Kuh *et al*, 2005). Students who lack study skills do not recognize a problem until they fail an exam or other assignment, which is often impossible to recover from in order to salvage a passing grade in the class. To remedy this problem, several universities have established pilot programs to identify these unprepared students before they fail. Early Alert is the most common name for the program which attempts to identify and offer resources to students who display signs of distress in the first month of classes.

To accomplish this early alert, data collection is imperative. When faculty regularly log attendance, early grades, class participation and other warning flags, these students can be notified and directed to university resources as early as four weeks into a semester. These students might still struggle, but failure rates dropped significantly (Taylor and McAleese, 2012). A 2006 study concluded that implementing early alert reduced the percentage of students who dropped courses due to multiple absences. Students were even surprised that their attendance was tracked and that someone on campus was so concerned as to contact them (Hudson, 2006). New college students clearly struggle with their new responsibility. While not relieving them of that responsibility, tracking their attendance and alerting them to failure seems to improve their skills in the classroom.

The Early Alert program assesses more than attendance; it combines multiple sets of data to help identify students with other skill issues. In 2008 Frederick Community College created an early alert program. Instructors noted students who had multiple absences or poor grades. The alert was sent to the student, and the student was referred to an academic advisor. As a result the college reported that successful outcomes for students rose from 52% to 66% in that semester (Chappell, 2010). Ultimately, the goal of any early alert is to get students help before their lack of preparation dooms their classroom performance. A student who avoids a failing grade or a withdrawal in their first year will be better prepared to graduate within four years. In addition, the program should make the student more responsible for his or her own success. Instead of being left without help, the student is clearly made aware of any problem and offered help. Early alert, when implemented and combined with direction to campus resources, offers every student the best chance to succeed.

One way that early alert also encourages higher retention rates is by helping the student feel part of a larger community. Unfortunately, the majority of students who lack preparation for college tend to be either first-generation students, economically disadvantaged, or both (Tough 2014). They do not know how to succeed in a university setting, and when they face problems in the classroom they do not know where to turn. Early alert can help identify those students and direct them to appropriate resources. This issue is particularly important with freshman as they face the most crucial moment for long-term success is the first year of college (Upcraft *et al*, 2005). Freshman to sophomore persistence increases if the student finds a support network (Nora *et al*, 2005). While many freshman initiatives target out-of-class issues, time management, and personal development, grades seem to be the largest reason for dropouts (Upcraft *et al*, 2005). To that end, an early alert system, while not a magic bullet, can increase retention and performance for underprepared students.

### **Planning for Early Alert**

For an early alert system to be effective, instructors must plan for it. The class syllabus must be constructed to provide data to the instructor in order to flag students who might have trouble with college-level skills. This data may take different forms depending on the topic, the class, and the preferences of the instructor. Unlike midterm grades, which reflect knowledge and content learned in the class, early alert programs measure the student's baseline skills upon entering the course. Through Early Alert the instructor is mapping the student's preparation and likelihood of success in the class. The instructor should plan on collecting data in multiple ways during the first few weeks of classes.



Instructors often complain that early alert comes too quickly in the term and that students cannot yet be evaluated. This concern shows how Early Alert can be misunderstood. Attendance, participation, and communication with the instructor are all necessary skills to succeed in the university environment. Early alert is designed to identify students who are unprepared in these areas. Students in freshman-heavy classes are most likely to lack these skills. By identifying them early and directing them to resources on campus, their chances of success (not just in that course but for the entirety of their academic career) are greatly increased.

So how do you measure skills instead of knowledge? The instructor should consider what skills are essential to success in the given course. In almost every course attendance is paramount. Students who miss class, even classes when they are not yet enrolled, will be at a disadvantage. Requiring attendance can measure how well a student can and will meet the basic course requirements. Instructors should consider ways to track attendance and input that data into any early alert. No matter what method you choose, absences should be entered into an online database. Instructors should also try to measure for comprehension of syllabus requirements, technological familiarity, pre-requisite knowledge, and study skills. Each of these issues, which can prevent a student from fully grasping material in class, can be addressed through early alert measurement.

Besides being physically present, the instructor should try to ascertain the student's familiarity with college-level expectations. Many instructors require a syllabus quiz to continue with the class, which ensures that students are aware of their responsibilities in the class. Other low-stakes quizzes may also measure basic study skills and student's mental engagement with

the class. If the class has pre-requisites, the quizzes might cover that material to examine the student's fitness to be taking a class. The results of data in the first four weeks helps to identify students who would benefit from university resources.

Disadvantaged and non-traditional students are often unfamiliarity with technology. Requiring students to interact during the first few weeks with technology can identify those who lack technology skills. Resources might be examined during these weeks by offering quizzes in an online environment and requiring students to post to an online discussion. Students who struggle with technology issues should be sent to the appropriate on-campus training prior to the due date of an exam or assignment using that technology. This examination also allows instructors to catch any technological flaws in the system early in the semester.

Students' preparation for a class is a final way that students can be measured. More than any other area, this will vary from discipline to discipline. The sciences may require a remedial exam to ensure that students have the requisite knowledge to proceed with the class. The humanities might require a brief writing assignment to gauge a student's ability. In either case the focus should be on measuring where the student is prior to any major content knowledge from the class in question. For an instructor, the practice can be freeing because it unmask the underlying problems. If students suffer from preparation problems and not in-class problems, the instructor can make better judgments about pedagogical practices. Students are not adequately prepared can be directed to the most useful campus resources.

### **Implementing Early Alert**

Following in the path of other successful universities, UNCC has been testing a new system to integrate the data and issue early alerts to faculty and academic advisors. This tool,

which is tied in with the university's online platform (Moodle2), is named Starfish® and should be available beginning in the Fall semester of 2015. Starfish® is the early alert tool that gives instructors the ability to keep track of student's progress. An instructor builds an institutional profile that contains their contact information and office hours for students to make appointments with them. Email notifications are sent to both the instructor and students to remind them about appointments. The Outlook calendar and Starfish® calendar can be linked and all appointments can be seen at the same time. A progress survey is provided for each course by which an instructor can raise flags if necessary. Starfish® can be integrated with Moodle 2 gradebook, therefore instructors can flag students that are below a certain grade or number of attendance days. If an instructor raises a flag then a standard email will be sent to students about their progress as well as their academic advisors. An instructor can also send positive feedback to students to encourage them to keep up their good work.

While Starfish will ease the burden of collecting data for instructors, they must still plan for proper evaluation to take place during the semester. Instructors should also prepare their students to receive alerts. A poorly prepared student should be given a warning with the proper framing to maximize potential changes in behavior. The student should be offered support and suggestions for improvement. This warning comes early enough in the semester that students can improve. If the student is willing to take steps to improve, a failure or withdrawal does not have to be inevitable. Instructors can assist by sending a personal email that offers guidance for the next steps in class. Students should be reminded by their advisors and instructors that early alert is not a tool to punish bad students, but it is rather an opportunity to improve their success.

## Resources

### [Student's guide to Moodle2](#)

A Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) presentation for students unfamiliar with the university's online platform.

### [Writing Resource Center](#)

The writing center will work with students in writing and re-writing their papers. They also offer online tutoring for students if they cannot make it physically to a meeting.

### [UNCC Tutoring Services](#)

The tutoring center is offered by the Center for Academic Excellence. It is a free service available to all students.

### [Study groups offered by Center for Academic Excellence](#)

This is a free academic support program that utilizes peer-led group study to help students succeed.

### [Personal Consults on Academic Problems by Center for Academic Excellence](#)

These Personal Academic Consultations (PACs) are one-on-one sessions led by graduate students that help students develop specific strategies to address their academic concerns.

### [Study Skills Workshops](#)

The center for academic excellence offers a variety of topics for these workshops which range from time management to oral presenting skills to personal budgeting.

### [Disability Services Home](#)

### [Starfish Training](#)

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## **Campus Resources**

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### **Introduction**

In this chapter we provide an overview of what resources UNC-Charlotte has for both faculty and students. The types of resources are grouped under two sections:

**Section I. Support for Faculty: Professional Development, Teaching Resources, and Personal Resources.**

**Section II. Support for Students: Academic and Personal Resources**

Resources are briefly annotated. This chapter highlights the usefulness of some of these resources via embedded video testimonials and a few “spotlights” or closer looks.

### **Section I**

#### **Support for Faculty: Professional Development**

The following section offers an overview of helpful links to assist faculty development. There are brief descriptors of each program/ service with hyperlinks at the end of the section. [See Full-Time Faculty Handbook at <http://facultyhandbooks.uncc.edu/full-time-faculty-handbook> ] Highlights for the purposes of this chapter.

**Advance.** The UNC Charlotte ADVANCE Faculty Affairs and Diversity Office builds faculty diversity and promotes faculty success through research and programming on recruitment, re-appointment, promotion and tenure practices. Success through policy reform, mentoring, leadership and career development are also promoted. [More information can be found at advance.uncc.edu](http://advance.uncc.edu)

**Bridges.** An intensive leadership development program for women in higher education who seek to gain or to strengthen their academic leadership capabilities, and move into leadership roles in the academy. [bridges.uncc.edu](http://bridges.uncc.edu)

**Faculty Mentoring.** The ADVANCE Faculty Mentoring Program provides professional support for tenure-track faculty, as they advance towards promotion and tenure. The initiatives provide one-to-one and group support for new faculty and also for mid-career faculty in a group setting and for a few colleges in a pilot effort that matches mentors and mid-career mentorees one-to-one. These university-wide efforts augment, but do not replace, the mentoring and coaching provided within faculty's home colleges and departments. [mentoring@uncc.edu](mailto:mentoring@uncc.edu)

**International Programs.** The Office of International Programs strives to strengthen international education at the University as well as in the Charlotte community. On campus, it seeks to make international understanding and global awareness a fundamental part of the curriculum and an integral part of campus programming. [OIP.uncc.edu](http://OIP.uncc.edu)

**Reassignment of Duties.** The purpose of the Faculty Development Reassignment of Duties Program (RD) is to provide institutional encouragement and tangible support to faculty in order to maintain, broaden and enhance instructional, scholarly research, and service capabilities that are valued by the Colleges and Departments. In particular, the program provides resources on a competitive and accountable basis to make reassignments of duties for selected faculty to pursue professional interests surrounding their institutional responsibilities. <http://provost.uncc.edu/policies/reassignment-duties>

**Research Services.** Offers a wide variety of research resources and “Provides services for the review and submission of proposals to funding agencies, including the interpretation of guidelines, preparation of budgets, and mailing and tracking of proposals. This office coordinates research-support efforts with college research officers.” [Research.uncc.edu](http://Research.uncc.edu)

## Support for Faculty: Teaching Resources

The following section will illustrate teaching resources.

**Information & Technology Services.** ITS' mission is to set new standards of service and introduce new information systems in support of our clients: faculty, staff, students, alumni, and the Charlotte community. <http://itservices.uncc.edu/home/mission-goals>

### SPOTLIGHT:

**Center for Teaching and Learning.** The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) enhances the University's mission of teaching and learning excellence, provides enterprise level instructional technologies, and champions the advancement of scholarly teaching.

As a faculty member, you are not alone in striving to develop significant learning experiences for your students. The Center for Teaching and Learning enhances the University's mission of teaching and learning excellence, provides enterprise level instructional technologies, and champions the advancement of scholarly teaching. Major priorities include:

- Providing professional development opportunities to ensure constructive and active learning environments.
- Leveraging the experience and wisdom of faculty leaders to promote teaching excellence.
- Encouraging innovative research and scholarly publication on teaching and learning.
- Identifying, developing, and sustaining enterprise level instructional technology systems.
- Collaborating with campus constituents to assess programs, tools, and services that support their teaching and learning needs.
- Contributing to the development of policies, initiatives, and campus-wide culture that supports excellence in teaching.



In addition to managing the campus' web-based course evaluation system, the Center for Teaching and Learning offers a wide array of workshops for faculty and graduate students who are teaching that focus on everything from using Moodle, our campus learning management system to integrating service learning, syllabus development and tools for student engagement. You should regularly consult the Center's workshop, webinar and special event calendar to know what's available and what new offerings are available. Additional services available through the CTL include:

- **Classroom Observations:** Informal observations of teaching
- **Instructional Consultation:** Instructional consultation and advisement to individuals, groups, and departments is available regarding their teaching and learning needs
- **Large Course Redesign:** Services to help faculty members and departments to improve large enrollment courses
- **Learning Multi-Media Developers (MDs):** Learning MDs provide training in the creation of digital learning objects for faculty. Student interns will assist & train faculty in video & audio production for Moodle, to augment classroom instruction, to develop tutorials and more!
- **Practice Teaching:** In the Practice Teaching program, an individual instructor or TA practices the week's lesson or lecture in front of one or two CTL consultants
- **Doctoral Students Program:** To introduce doctoral students to the teaching practices used in higher education instruction and to help prepare them to pursue careers in college-level teaching. <http://teaching.uncc.edu/>

**Classroom Policies and Practices.** Guidelines to help faculty determine whether their classroom policies are legally enforceable or supportable. These guidelines are not intended to be comprehensive, but they should serve as a good starting point for faculty to "test" policies before they implement them. <https://legal.uncc.edu/legal-topics/classroom-policies-and-practices/guidance-enforceability-classroom-policies-and>

**Code of Student Academic Integrity.** The academic integrity standards for UNC Charlotte students are the subject of this policy. Descriptions of each form of academic integrity violation are provided as well as the penalties, procedures for handling cases, penalties which may be imposed, and appeal procedures. Students and faculty members are expected to be familiar with the provisions of this Code.

<http://legal.uncc.edu/policies/up-407>

**Copyright Guidelines.** Visit the website for information on UNC Charlotte's copyright policies.

<http://library.uncc.edu/copyright>

**Disruptive Conduct Situations.** The University protects freedom of expression, peaceful picketing and demonstration, and peaceable assembly. Deliberate destruction of property, threats or intimidation against others, or violence intended to disrupt normal University operations will not be tolerated. This policy describes the procedures for responding to such intentional obstruction or disruption, and describes the rights of persons charged with violations of the standard.

<https://legal.uncc.edu/policies/up-601.13>

**Faculty Services University Bookstore.** Barnes & Noble at UNC Charlotte offers a selection of textbooks and supplies that are required/ suggested for courses. [uncc.bncollege.com](http://uncc.bncollege.com)

**FERPA Guidelines.** The primary purpose of FERPA is to protect the privacy of student information, and this protection is achieved by controlling access to and disclosure of students' "education records," as that term is defined in FERPA. <https://legal.uncc.edu/legal-topics/ferpa>

**Grays bookstore.** A local off campus option to order books and/or purchase supplies.

<https://graysbooks.com>

**Library Course Reserves.** The library offers a service to reserve course related materials.

<http://library.uncc.edu/reserves>

**Opscan Services.** Include Test Scoring of standard answer sheets for tests/exams, scanning standard answer sheets and building data files. <http://itservices.uncc.edu/services/opscan-services>

**Repros.** On campus copy and print services. <http://aux.uncc.edu/copyprint>

### **Support for Faculty: Personal Resources**

The following section offers a wide variety of helpful resources offered to faculty.

**Employee Assistance Program (EAP)** Employee Assistance Program provides free benefits to full time employees. Confidential Counseling - eligible employees and their families can receive confidential counseling with highly trained master's and doctoral level clinicians 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The EAP offers up to 5 (five) in-person counseling sessions per issue at no cost.

**Employee Health and Wellness.** Employee Health and Wellness is dedicated to providing you with information about health and wellness-related issues, programs and events to help UNC Charlotte faculty and staff members meet fitness and wellness goals. <http://yourhealth.uncc.edu/>

**Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993.** The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 was passed by Congress to balance the demands of the workplace with the needs of families, to promote the stability and economic security of families, and to promote national interests in preserving family integrity; to minimize the potential for employment discrimination on the basis of sex by ensuring generally that leave is available for eligible medical reasons (including maternity-related disability) and for compelling family reasons; and to promote the goal of equal employment opportunity for women and men. <http://hr.uncc.edu/pims/family-and-medical-leave>

**Financial Information and Resources.** Certified Public Accountants and Certified Financial Planners are available to answer financial questions.

**Legal Support and Resources.** Attorneys are available to provide information about legal matters such as divorce and family law, debt and bankruptcy, and real estate transactions. Work-Life Solutions – Comprehensive resources and referral networks specializing in child and elder care, moving and relocation, college planning, home repair and pet care.

<http://yourhealth.uncc.edu/mental-wellness/eap-info>

**New Faculty Information.** <https://advance.uncc.edu/programming/programs/resources-new-faculty> "To download of copy of the presentation: "How to Become a "Quick Starter" from the New Faculty Orientation Program click [here](#). If you're new to the Charlotte area, click on [On the Town](#) to discover some interesting things to do in and around town. Download the 2013-2014 [New Faculty Information Brochure](#)

**Police and Public Safety.** The UNC Charlotte Police Department is a state authorized law enforcement agency providing a full array of police and security services. <http://police.uncc.edu>

## Section II

### Support for Students: Academic Resources

The following section will help guide students to find campus academic resources.

**Honors College.** Honors College is the hub for all honors experiences on campus. High achieving students can connect to honors programs offered by colleges and departments, or to the University Honors Program in the Honors College. <http://honorscollege.uncc.edu/>

**Learning Communities.** Learning Communities help students transition through academic and social challenges by providing small, supportive living and learning environments. While most Learning Communities are residentially based, some do not require living on campus. All are one-year programs designed for freshmen except two that are specifically designed for transfers. <http://lc.uncc.edu/>

**Multicultural Academic Services.** The Office of Multicultural Academic Services, while open to all students, provides academic support to students of African, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, Pacific Islander, and Native American descent. The Office serves as a clearinghouse for information and referrals to ensure access and long-term academic success of all students. <http://mas.uncc.edu/>

**Office of Distance Education.** Distance Education at UNC Charlotte is focused on the delivery of a select number of programs -- baccalaureate completion programs, master's degrees, graduate certificates, and teacher licensure programs. UNC Charlotte's online programs provide busy individuals -

with work, family, and other responsibilities - the opportunity to continue their education without having to travel to campus. <http://distanceed.uncc.edu/>

### SPOTLIGHT

**University Center for Academic Excellence.** The University Center for Academic Excellence, located on the 3rd floor of the Fretwell building (330) and in Atkins 114 B, provides free academic support for enrolled UNC Charlotte students. UCAE consists of six programs working in conjunction to attain a singular objective - to provide academic support services, programs, and resources that increase learning effectiveness, enhance student success and promote academic excellence.

<http://ucaee.uncc.edu/>:

1. **Tutorial Services:** free tutoring to any enrolled UNC Charlotte student needing assistance in a current course or courses
2. **Supplemental Instruction:** SI is a free academic support program that utilizes peer-led group study to help students succeed. The SI sessions are facilitated by SI Leaders, current students who have already successfully completed the course supported.
3. **The Learning Lab:** The UCAE's Learning Lab offers students many resources to help them study better and study smarter, from an extensive DVD library to one-on-one meetings with graduate students who are experts in study skills and college survival. The Learning Lab offers a relaxed atmosphere that encourages academic success. Many students find the Learning Lab to be their academic home away from home.
4. **Individual Consultation:** Personal Academic Consultations (PACs) are one-on-one sessions that help students develop specific strategies to address their academic concerns.
5. **Building Educational Strengths and Talent (BEST):** A Federal TRIO Student Support Services Program

**University Writing Programs.** First-year Writing (FYW) and the Writing Resources Center (WRC), together constitute a free-standing academic program of the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, comprised of pedagogical and research activities related to the development of writing ability as well as to disciplinary inquiry in the fields of rhetoric and composition. <http://writing.uncc.edu/writing-resources-center>

### **Support for Students: Personal Resources**

The following section offers a wide variety of helpful resources offered to students.

**Adult Students and Evening Services (OASES).** The Office of Adult Students and Evening Services serves as a principal resource for nontraditional students, and offers extended hours to serve these students. Services include general education advising, referrals, parking decal pick-up, and assistance with processing various forms. <http://oases.uncc.edu/>

**Assessments.** “If you just want a quick online assessment to get your results immediately, you can take [FOCUS-2](#) or [Bridges](#) . These assessments provide a way for high school and college students to quickly assess their key VIPS (values, interests, personality preferences, and skills), and they provide helpful links to learn about hundreds of types of occupations and careers, majors, and college programs. If you want something more in-depth, we encourage you to visit the Career Center (Atkins 150, next to the library) to speak to a trained Career Advisor about whether the Strong Interest Inventory or MBTI is right for you.”

**Career and Internship Fairs.** <https://careerfairs.uncc.edu/>

From one of their Success Stories: “The University Career Center was extremely instrumental in assuring that my resume portrayed me in a way to make me a solid candidate. It gives you a huge advantage over people who decide not to use it. The services allow you to sharpen your skills and be in a better position to pursue your dreams after college. I participated in career fairs, mock interviews, resume critiques, MBTI and Strong, and career counseling - you name it, I did it. My additional advice to

current UNC Charlotte students - Get involved in student orgs on campus and also venture off campus to network with professionals in the city.”

**SPOTLIGHT:**

**Counseling Center Services.** The UNC Charlotte Counseling Center provides individual, couples, and group counseling services, consultation, outreach, and psychiatric services to support UNC Charlotte students. Visit website for specific directions on making an appointment depending on individual needs.

<http://counselingcenter.uncc.edu/>

1. **Personal Counseling:** The UNC Charlotte Counseling Center offers individual counseling to assist students with concerns of a personal nature by helping them develop better coping strategies, resolve conflicts and handle crisis situations. Typical concerns are depression, anxiety and stress, relationship issues, identity development, substance use problems, eating and body image issues. <http://counselingcenter.uncc.edu/our-services/individual-counseling>
2. **Group Counseling:** The Counseling Center offers both structured, theme-centered groups as well as interpersonal group counseling designed to help students achieve personal growth and development, discuss interpersonal issues or difficulties, and try out new ways of behaving. In group therapy, approximately six to ten people meet with two trained group therapists. <http://counselingcenter.uncc.edu/our-services/group-counseling>
3. **Couples Counseling:** Relationship counseling is available to partners who want to improve an intimate relationship. To be eligible for couples counseling, both members of the couple must be currently enrolled at UNC Charlotte. Both members usually attend the first session with a counselor. <http://counselingcenter.uncc.edu/our-services/couples-counseling>
4. **Outreach & Consultation:** the Counseling Center, the Outreach component of their services, strives to facilitate the holistic development of students including their academic, emotional, psychological, and interpersonal development. Furthermore, they seek to influence and

enhance the overall campus climate with campus partners to promote optimal wellness and health. This area is committed to providing prevention, awareness, education, and stigma reduction of mental health treatment through the extension of the Counseling Center services beyond the traditional “therapy walls” to the campus as a whole. Guided and driven by a commitment to social justice, and with a multicultural and developmental focus on overall student well-being, outreach services include psycho-educational programming, training, panel discussions, liaison relationship building with other campus department and units, and the provision of emotional support and a supportive presence at campus events.

<http://counselingcenter.uncc.edu/our-services/consultation-services>

**Dean of Students.** The Dean of Students office provides support for any student who has a grievance or concern about the University. The office also coordinates and assists with the settlement of academic and behavioral misconduct charges against individuals and student organizations.

<http://unccdsync.com/>

**Disability Services (DS).** Disability Services is responsible for ensuring access to academic programs and campus facilities for individuals with disabilities. If you have a disability and need academic accommodations, provide a letter of accommodation from Disability Services early in the semester. For more information on accommodations, contact the Office of Disability Services 230 Fretwell or 704-687-0040. <http://ds.uncc.edu/>

**Housing and Residence Life.** The staff who works with residential students can be a valuable resource <http://housing.uncc.edu/>. They are trained to work with students in a variety of areas, organize programs and services that contribute to the academic success of students, and assist with personal and adjustment issues Housing and Residence Life Calendar:

<http://housing.uncc.edu/welcome/about-us/calendars-and-important-dates>: a listing of important dates



relative to Housing and Residence Life. Maintenance Request:

<http://housing.uncc.edu/parents/housing-information/facility-services>

**Immunization Requirement.** See website for specifications on immunization requirements

<http://studenthealth.uncc.edu/immunizations>

**Mandatory Health Insurance Requirement.** See website for specifications on insurance requirements <http://studenthealth.uncc.edu/insurance>

**Online Student Health.** Fill out your Health History Form, make appointments, refill prescriptions, view immunization record, and fill out pre-visit forms. <https://studenthealthonline.uncc.edu/>

**Recreational Services.** The UNC Charlotte Fitness Program is a year-round program that offers a wide variety of services and fitness classes for all interests and levels  
<http://recservices.uncc.edu/fitness>.

**SafeRide.** SafeRide provides scheduled and on-demand disability transport throughout the inner core of campus for those with mobility impairments who are registered for the service. SafeRide is also available to those who need assistance on a temporary basis (such as recent surgery, visual impairments, etc.). <http://pats.uncc.edu/saferide>

**Student Health Center.** Promotes healthy students by providing healthcare, education, and outreach services. We provide primary medical care, psychiatric care, disease prevention and health education, wellness promotion, and various specialty services to all registered UNC Charlotte students.  
<http://studenthealth.uncc.edu/>

## SPOTLIGHT

**University Career Center.** Our services are designed to assist students in all stages of career decision making, internship search, and job search processes. We also provide career information to assist faculty in their advising and teaching roles. The University Career Center for Work, Service, and

Internships (UCC) offers comprehensive career services designed to assist undergraduate and graduate students in all stages of career development: career decision-making, career planning, career employment, and career assessment. <http://career.uncc.edu/>

## Learning How to Learn: Basic Skills, Making Connections, and Self-Direction

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### Abstract

As teachers, we often cite that one of our most important course objectives is teaching our students to “learn how to learn” (Fink, 37). However, there are different kinds of goals we associate with learning how to learn: learning basic academic skills, learning to inquire and construct knowledge, and learning how to be a self-directed learner. In this chapter, we describe each of these distinct goals and offer a number of suggestions for accomplishing each of them.

## Introduction

As teachers, we commonly cite as one of our most important course objectives that our students “learn how to learn” (Fink, 37). A number of educational theorists also identify “learning how to learn” as an element in their respective taxonomies of learning (Fink; Bloom). What is learning? What do we as educators mean when we say that we want our students to “learn how to learn”? What classroom strategies can we use to help students learn how to learn? We will use this chapter to answer these questions.

### “Learning How to Learn”

What is learning, and what do we mean by “learning how to learn”? Ambrose et. al define learning as “a *process* that leads to *change*, which occurs as a result of *experience* and increases the potential for improved performance and future learning” (Ambrose et al, p. 3; adapted from Mayer, 2002). We think this definition is helpful, and we’ll use it to guide our discussion and selection of strategies.

Ambrose et al. elaborate that learning is neither an “end result” nor a particular kind of event, but rather a continuous mental process. Because learning is a process, it takes place over time. Since learning is also mental, teachers and students can only infer that it is happening by evaluating the products or performances that students produce. This implies that students’ respective products or performances should provide evidence that they have changed in some way: that they now know or believe something they previously did not. It also implies that students can now do something they previously could not, or that they now feel differently about something than they previously did. These changes are not something we do to our students, rather, they are something that our students do for themselves by interpreting and

responding to a set of experiences. The most effective teaching strategies, then, are those that enable our students to experience something different and later to reflect on that experience. Accordingly, the strategies we mention later in this chapter are intended to help students experience something different and to better reflect on those experiences.

The strategies we describe later on will also be tied to one of three different kinds of goals that teachers typically have in mind when they use the phrase “learning how to learn” (Fink, pp. 49-55). These goals are (1) learning how to be a better student, (2) learning how to inquire and construct knowledge, and (3) learning how to be a self-directed learner.

### **Learning how to be a better student**

Often, we want our students to learn how to be better students by developing specific, basic skills. In this section, we offer suggestions for promoting more effective note-taking; reading comprehension; purposeful, clear writing and speaking; and making connections across courses. We refer to these skills as “gateway skills” because these skills allow students to experience deeper kinds of learning.

#### **Taking Notes**

In most classes, instructors devote at least a portion of the class to delivering content via lectures. Students are expected to take notes about the material in such a way that they can study those notes at a later date. A quick perusal of many notebooks, however, suggests that many students have little idea of what to write down, and often only write the words that the instructor includes on the lecture slides. When asked later to explain key terms and concepts that are listed in their notes, they are unable to do so. This is a particular problem for first-year

students who are not yet familiar with lecture-style classes and have never learned how to take useful notes.

Ideally, a student's notes should provide enough information that the student can later remember the material and, more importantly, understand the key concepts that the instructor was seeking to convey. The very process of taking notes should help the student to process and memorize the material, certainly more so than not taking notes at all.

Research shows that students retain more information when they take notes by hand instead of typing notes on a tablet or laptop (Mueller and Oppenheimer 2014). This is not solely because students with pen and paper are less distracted by Facebook and other websites, though this is certainly a factor. Because taking notes by hand is a much slower process than typing notes on a tablet or laptop, students who take notes with pen and paper are significantly more likely to identify, summarize, and better organize the main points of a lecture than students who take notes with a tablet or laptop, who, instead, are significantly more likely to type verbatim what they hear (Mueller and Oppenheimer 2014). Thus, instructors may want to encourage students to take notes by hand and discourage the use of laptops.

It is quite difficult to teach students how to take effective and efficient notes, likely because there are different approaches for different types of learners. Some students need to write down as much as possible, while others find it sufficient to write short phrases that will remind them later about the broader point. In general, a good note-taker will:

- Put the date at the beginning of their notes for a given class
- Write in short phrases, not sentences

- Be as concise as possible without omitting information necessary to make sense of the notes later
- Organize the notes by using headers and/or indentation
- Use stars or other notations to highlight key terms and concepts.

In the next few sections we will discuss several strategies and activities that can help students develop their ability to take better notes.

**Collect and curate.** In large introductory classes, particularly those with many first-year students, an instructor may want to collect students' notes early in the semester and review them. The instructor can select a few examples of efficient notes and inefficient notes to show to the class on the document camera (after taking care to remove identifying personal information). This is a simple yet effective tool to introduce students to proper note-taking skills.

**Offer a payoff.** Another strategy to encourage better note-taking is to allow students to use their notes while taking quizzes and/or exams. Some instructors limit this to a single page of handwritten notes, which forces students to transfer their most important notes onto one sheet of paper (often with very tiny handwriting!). The very process of copying over notes prior to an exam can help students better learn the material, and may even obviate their need to refer to the note page during the exam. Instructors who give exams on Moodle often find it easier to allow students to use their class notes. This removes one potential source of cheating (in that everyone gets to "cheat") and rewards students who have organized their notes for quick reference during the exam. Instructors can also raise their expectations when students

have access to notes during exams, although some students will become more worried because they realize that the instructor will expect more thorough responses.

**Pair students.** Finally, if students are still having problems learning how to take notes in class, they can be matched up in pairs. Ideally, the instructor would match up a student who takes good notes with someone who does not, but the logistics of doing this in a large class may be too complicated. Instead, students can choose their own partners and exchange notes periodically throughout the semester. This technique may be particularly useful in courses that have extensive group or team-exercises in which students can compare notes within prearranged groups or teams. Knowing that another person will be reviewing their notes may be enough to force students to be more deliberate note-takers, but they can also get useful note-taking ideas while simultaneously learning course material by reviewing partners' notes. With this strategy, an instructor can get students to study without even realizing they are doing so. However, be wary of certain students taking advantage of their partners' notes.

### **Reading for Comprehension**

A frequent complaint of many students, especially those just starting their college career, is that there is too much reading. They think that they are expected to read every word of every assigned article or book and will complain that they do not have time to do the reading for all of their classes. Even some of the best students read closely and highlight or underline nearly every sentence in an assigned article, yet they cannot summarize the key findings when asked. Learning how to read for comprehension and key points is an important and priceless tool for students to acquire.



**Share “six myths”.** Although there are plenty of programs and methods out there to teach people to read more quickly, instructors can help students learn the basics of reading for comprehension without taking too much class time. One place to start is by sharing with students the list of “Six Reading Myths” published by the Academic Skills Center at Dartmouth College (2001). The myths they identify are as follows:

Myth #1: I have to read every word.

Myth #2: Reading once is enough.

Myth #3: It is sinful to skip passages in reading.

Myth #4: Machines are necessary to improve my reading speed.

Myth #5: If I skim or read too rapidly, my comprehension will drop.

Myth #6: There is something about my eyes that keeps me from reading fast.

Once students have accepted that these are myths, they are open to new approaches. Some instructors tell students to intentionally skip key chunks of the articles they assign, and to only read the full introduction and conclusion, the first and last paragraph of each section, and the first and last sentence of each paragraph in between. If the article is well-written (and it is the instructor’s responsibility to select articles that are), students should be able to comprehend the key points through this method. Only if they do not understand or lose track of the line of argument should it be necessary to read the full paragraph in some sections.

**Ask for abstract.** Another strategy that can be used to teach reading for comprehension is to give students an article without an abstract and ask them to write one. This assignment can be done in class or as homework (though you might want to be careful that students cannot find an existing abstract for the article). Students can work individually or in small

groups. The instructor then collects the abstracts and shares with the class examples of abstracts that concisely summarize the key arguments or findings of the article without getting bogged down in unnecessary details or tangents. This assignment can also be done with an article that has a poorly-written abstract, which makes the point to students that summarizing key findings is an acquired skill that even some authors themselves do not do very well.

**Guide discussion questions.** Another strategy that works well in large or small classes is to provide students with a list of discussion questions about a reading before the class period in which the reading will be discussed. The questions can help guide students to focus in on the key arguments, including those that are most relevant to the broader course. In addition to specific assignments about the readings, instructors may want to ask “Why did the author write this article?” and “Why did I assign this article?” These questions encourage students to think about what they are supposed to take away from their reading of an article and the broader purpose of academic inquiry.

**Encourage reflective reading.** Some instructors may want to encourage students to think more reflectively about reading, as advocated by Richard Paul and Linda Elder in “The Art of Close Reading,” which is available on the website of The Critical Thinking Community. In addition to understanding their purpose in reading and the author’s purpose in writing, this approach encourages readers to engage more deeply with a text by asking questions like “What is the most important point of this paragraph?” and “Have I ever experienced a situation that sheds light on this idea?” This method may actually require students to take more time with a given text, and time is something that many students complain they do not have, but can also result in a deeper understanding of important concepts and issues. If an instructor wants this

level of engagement with an assigned reading, s/he should make this clear to students and limit the amount of additional work that is assigned for that class.

**Use quizzes and exams.** It is important for instructors to use their quizzes and exams to convey a message about what material they expect students to take away from the readings. If an instructor tells students to focus on the key findings and major arguments of a text, but then tests them on minute details from specific sections, students learn that they do in fact need to read every word. If exam questions (or even sample questions during class) focus more on broader themes and takeaway points, it becomes clear to students that they should focus on seeing the forest through the trees.

### **Writing Assignments in Large Courses**

Teaching students how to write is a huge topic that has been covered in several lengthy discussions. It is also beyond the scope of this chapter, although this section focuses on the challenges of incorporating writing into large (100+ student) introductory courses, often without any teaching assistants. Most faculty recognize that the importance of student writing is not just to learn writing skills, but also to better grasp course material. However, instructors often are reluctant to give writing assignments in such large classes because of the grading burden.

**Adopt small-stakes writing activities.** In large courses, it is possible to give students small-stakes opportunities to engage with the course material through writing. One example is having students engage in reflective writing during the last five minutes of class. A fun approach is to ask them to summarize the class in one word and then explain why they chose that word. Responses can be submitted on notebook paper or index cards, or by using an electronic

response system such as Top Hat (“clickers” do not yet allow for the submission of lengthier text). With this writing activity you can read students’ writing fairly quickly and assign grades of “check” or “check plus.”

**Encourage online discussion.** Another writing option is for students to participate in online discussion forums through Moodle about course-related topics. You can pose questions that draw directly on the readings and lectures, or ask students to connect the course material with their own experiences. Moodle discussions can be used to continue debates that emerged during class or to spark new conversations that there was not enough time to cover in class. Many students in large courses feel more comfortable engaging with the course material through the relative anonymity of online discussions, rather than speaking in front of 150 peers in the classroom. Therefore, it is helpful to try to give students these opportunities as much as possible. Some instructors make participation in online discussions optional, thus allowing motivated students to engage with the material and earn credit for participation while reducing the frequency of time-wasting submissions that are posted just to meet some minimum requirement.

**Ask for self-reflection.** Although it can be a challenge in large classes, writing can also be used to help students learn more about their own learning processes and styles. Self-reflection is a key part of this endeavor. When students have completed an assignment, even one that involves simple “right” and “wrong” answers such as solving a math equation, they may learn more by writing about how they did the assignment, including the steps they took to arrive at their answers. This may not be practical in some classes, but students should be encouraged to engage in self-reflection through writing and other strategies whenever possible.

**Oral Communication**

Even courses that are not designed to teach public speaking skills can still provide opportunities for students to increase their competency in oral communication. Many students do not have the opportunity or necessity to take a public speaking class during college, and yet most will be expected to engage in some sort of public speaking during their future careers. Given the amount of fear that some students have about speaking in front of audiences, to the point of becoming physically sick in extreme cases, it is helpful to provide them with as many opportunities as possible to practice public speaking. Practice may not make perfect, but it certainly can help them improve. Although it can be particularly challenging for large classroom settings, here are a few ideas for incorporating public speaking activities into your curriculum.

**Incorporate mini-presentations.** One idea is to break a large class into smaller groups and have each person within the group do a mini-presentation about a key concept or term from the course material, or about a relevant current event. This can reasonably be done within one class period, but creates a challenge for the instructor to grade if multiple students are presenting to their groups simultaneously. One way around this challenge is to have students record their own mini-presentations (which is quite easy using smart phones) and upload them to Moodle for viewing by others in the class or just by the instructor.

**Require debates or simulations.** Some instructors require students to participate in debates or simulations. Debates require students to research a topic and coordinate their line of argument for or against a clearly-articulated resolution. You can divide your class up into groups, with two groups participating in each debate. Mini-debates are an option if it is not possible to use a full class period, especially if there are many groups that need to participate

during a semester. Alternatively, you can divide students up into teams that all participate in a single simulation. Students can participate in a simulated international negotiation about a new global environmental treaty, for example. Although this may be most relevant for a class on international organizations, it could also be used in science classes to have students better appreciate the often-heated relationship between the practice of science and the art of policymaking. In especially large classes, an instructor may give students the option of participating in a simulation or doing an alternative assignment such as a paper. With some students selecting each option (which is easy to coordinate by using the “Choice” activity in Moodle), the numbers are more manageable for both the simulation and for grading the other assignment.

### **Learning how to inquire and construct knowledge**

Most instructors know how difficult it can be to help students develop any of these specific, gateway skills. So why do we try? The reason is that without them, students are less likely to be able to think: to inquire, to make connections, and to construct knowledge or make meaning. Indeed, that we want students to accomplish these “higher-order” thinking goals is implicit in some of the gateway skills and strategies suggested in the previous section (e.g. one-word summaries). To Inquire, connect, and make meaning: these constitute the second sense in which instructors and educational theorists want students to “learn how to learn.”

Sometimes we want our students to learn how to ask questions and generate answers in our specific discipline, and so we want them to learn the methods of scientific inquiry, of historical inquiry, of literary inquiry, of mathematical inquiry, etc. Since these sort of skills are discipline or field specific, we will not focus on these particular kinds of skills, but we do

recommend that you reflect on the extent to which it is one of your course goals that your students learn how to “think like a scientist”, “think like a historian,” “think like a literary critic,” “think like a mathematician,” etc.

Equally as often, we want our students to learn how to ask general kinds of questions and generate their answers so they can learn how to learn in any area of inquiry. This requires students to be able to reconstruct “part to whole” relations, to analyze and synthesize, and to move cognitively from bigger to smaller picture, from themes to specifics, from objectives to particulars, and vice versa. As Marton et al. write:

“In most complex learning, however, the main aim underlying a learning task involving material such as an academic text is not the learning of facts, but rather the learning of an organized whole in which certain facts are embedded. This represents a very significant shift. The aim has become the learning of the organized whole, through a grasp of the interrelation between the parts which make up that whole. Within this organizational and referential framework, a specific fact is often of no consequence. It often does not matter whether the fact itself has been remembered or not, and it may not even matter if the fact has not been understood” (Marton et al, p. 63).

If helping students learn how to inquire or construct meaning is one of your teaching goals, you can provide experiences that help students do just that. We suggest seven activities below, but encourage you to review several other excellent teaching resources that list hundreds of different activities (Angelo and Cross; Barkley; Bean).

### **Background Knowledge Analysis and Focused Lists**

What students believe before coming into the classroom can sometimes hinder their construction of new thoughts and meanings. Having your students analyze their background and beliefs before pursuing new material can help them connect with what they are about to investigate. An analysis of preexisting knowledge and beliefs typically consists of a specific set

of questions that the instructor has prepared. You can ask students to write short answers or circle answers to multiple-choice questions, or a combination of these.

An efficient form of a background knowledge analysis is a focused list. For this activity, you simply provide students with one term, concept, issue, or theory and ask students to list a number of ideas related to that focus point. This offers students a chance to preview a specific issue, concept, or topic they are about to cover and to reflect on what they might already know or believe about that issue, concept, or topic. It may also give you a glimpse of what teaching issues you will need to address and an easy way to begin class discussion. You can also use the same analysis activity at the end of a lesson and ask students to reflect on their “before and after” responses; have their beliefs changed? If so, in what important way? If not, why not? What do they still not quite understand? Have they changed in any way as a result of the lesson?

### **One-Word Summaries**

Although one-word summaries were previously mentioned, this classroom strategy can be efficient in learning how to inquire and construct meaning. A one-word summary activity consists of two parts. First, students summarize a reading, scene from a play, lesson, unit, or even the entire course in one word or phrase. Then, students write one or two paragraphs explaining why they have selected that word or phrase. This activity forces students to produce scores of material and explain their connections. You may even ask your students to maintain a One-Word Journal as a semester-long learning portfolio.



**One-Sentence Summaries**

A simple modification of the one-word summary is the one-sentence summary, in which students summarize using one sentence rather than one word. Like all of the activities described in this section, this activity requires students to move from bigger- to smaller-picture and vice versa, to connect the smaller, finer points to the bigger, more general points.

**Concept Maps and Other Visual Activities**

A concept map is a diagram that connects a single concept or several major concepts with other concepts the student has learned. Creating a concept map requires students to identify and organize all of the information they are learning, i.e. to construct knowledge. Although concept maps can be very effective, other types of visual aids may be more appropriate at times. For example, a table can help students compare issues, theories, or readings with respect to important criteria or features, while a pro/con-grid can help students flesh out the considerations that readings or a learning unit have raised in favor of or opposition to a particular theory or proposed solution. Diagrams can help students organize their knowledge of a systems' elements and processes. The central uses of these visual activities is to help students connect the bigger picture with the smaller picture, reflect on what they have learned, and generate the questions that will drive their inquiry forward.

**One-Page Summaries**

Students can use concept maps and other visuals to summarize entire units or even your entire course. For example, students can use some type of visual aid to synthesize material for the first unit of your course. At the end of the second unit, students can use some type of visual aid to provide a one-page summary of the material for that unit and a second one-page

summary of everything in the course up to that point, and so on for the remaining units of the course. This type of iterative activity has high value: the one-page unit summary requires students to construct their own understanding of the entire unit while the one-page course summary requires students to integrate their new knowledge with what they have learned previously, and in doing so, students are required to continually review the previous material.

### **Minute Paper**

At the end of a class session, lesson, unit, or entire course, students can be given the opportunity to reflect on what they have learned. For a minute paper in its simplest form, students are given one to three minutes at the end of a class period to answer two questions: “What is the most important thing you learned in today’s class (lesson, unit, course, etc)?” and “What is the most important question you still have?” The minute paper can, of course, be scaled (“What are the three most important things you learned in today’s class?” and “What are the three most important questions you still have?”). Done regularly, the minute paper can provide many students their first experience with consistent studying immediately after a class. For example, students can be given five to seven minutes at the end of a class to answer these three questions: “What is the most important thing I got out of today’s lesson?”, “What am I still most confused about?”, and “What follow-up do I most need to do?”

### **Curation Portfolios**

A curation portfolio asks students to select a certain number of samples of their work and then reflect on the significance of those samples, either individually or collectively. Curation portfolios are a mainstay in the fine or applied arts, where students are often asked to curate a certain number of photographs, art pieces, music selections, etc. They are also used in

web design and writing classes, where students are often asked to curate a certain number of web sites or short stories that they have been asked to complete throughout a semester. Students are then asked to reflect on the significance of each selection. Often students are asked to explain the most important lesson they have learned while completing each selection, the most important thing they have learned about themselves while completing each selection, or the most important connections they can make among the different selections.

### **Process Analysis**

As much as we want our students to inquire and construct informational knowledge (“knowing that”), we equally want our students to inquire and develop skill knowledge (“knowing how”). Process analysis is an effective way for students to reflect and improve upon how and why they are doing something. For these assignments, students record their thinking process at each step of a problem. For example, as students are solving a math problem, they record why they made the move they did at step 1, then at step 2, etc. This activity can also be done when conducting an experiment, where students record why they made the move they did at step 1, step 2, etc. Students conducting research can also record their steps in the same manner. At the end of the activity, students summarize the most important lesson they learned while documenting their moves. This can also be an important lesson as an instructor; even when you want your students to develop certain skills, you also want them to move in and out, back and forth, from engagement to reflection.

The activities described above are simple and powerful on their own, and we encourage you to peruse other collections of student engagement techniques. You can weigh the power of these activities by asking students after the activity to reflect on what they have learned and

the questions they still have. You can also do all of these activities as “before and after” activities, having students do an activity before a reading, lecture, or lesson and then again afterward. Students can then reflect on what they have learned, how their thinking has changed, or what new questions they have. You can then ask students at the end of a semester what kind of activity has most helped their learning and why, giving students an opportunity to adopt some of these strategies in their own self-directed learning program, as discussed in the next section.

### **Learning how to be a self-directed learner**

Sometimes, we want to help our students do more than develop basic learning skills or even the higher-order inquiry skill of constructing knowledge; sometimes, we want to help our students become self-directed learners. We mean this in the very strong, literal sense: that students learn how to direct their own learning program by setting their own goals and making their own decisions. However, becoming a self-directed learner requires that students integrate two distinct, complex skill sets: consistent goal achievement and metacognitive awareness.

#### **Consistent Goal Achievement**

Consistent goal achievement in any academic area is neither the result of luck nor the result of effort applied haphazardly here and there. Instead, it requires one to acquire and develop a unique set of skills: setting goals, developing a strategy for accomplishing those goals, getting oneself to implement that strategy, evaluating its effectiveness, and revising one’s goals or strategies accordingly.

Teachers will often give students a set of learning goals or objectives, but if students are to direct their own learning, they need to develop their own goals. Their goals might include

some we have already mentioned; taking more helpful notes, reading with increased comprehension, speaking more confidently, or relating small concepts to bigger ones more insightfully. Their goals may also include others we have not mentioned, for example, study regularly in fifty-minute time blocks, get to class on time, or complete drafts of papers at least three days before they are due.

Suppose a student sets a general goal "to study more consistently" and settles, wisely, on a more specific goal to "study each night, Sunday thru Thursday, by 7:00 p.m. for one week." Having set that specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound "SMART" goal, they must then identify those considerations that might help or hinder their pursuit of that goal, so they create an effective strategy. For example, suppose a student recognizes that they had in the past studied more consistently when they had regularly studied somewhere other than their dorm, that they had such a good time with their friends at dinner that they would have trouble getting away to study, and that they will likely never make it to their new study location if they have to go back to their dorm room after dinner to get their study material. Then the student might develop a plan to bring their books with them to dinner, ask their friends to tease them into leaving their company by 6:30 p.m. so they can go study, at which time they leave to study on the fifth floor in the library from 7:00-10:00 p.m. in three intervals of fifty minutes studying/ten minutes rest. After implementing this plan, they find that they have no problem bringing their study material to dinner that their friends are actually finding it fun to push them out to study, but that their concentration lags from 9:00-10:00 p.m. The student might then revise their goal (to study from 7:00-9:00 p.m.), or might revise their plan (to study instead from 7:00-10:00 a.m.), making appropriate other revisions to their plan in light of

different considerations that might help or hinder their pursuit of studying consistently in the morning.

### **Metacognitive Awareness**

Directing one's own learning also requires that one integrate a unique set of cognitive skills that we call “metacognitive awareness.” This term refers to a set of skills, including the ability to monitor one’s observable behavior, motivation and affect, and cognitive control. In our example, our student is able to observe that they are not studying consistently (observable behavior), that they have a good time with their friends over dinner (observable behavior and affect) and, consequently, that their motivation to go off and study is often quite low during those times (motivation). They also realize that they lack sufficient cognitive energy (motivation) to focus (cognitive control) during their third study hour (observable behavior), that they are easily distracted during their study sessions by email and social media sessions (observable behavior and cognitive control), but that they are not distracted by such things when they do not have those distractions open during their study sessions (cognitive control and observable behavior).

Integrating the complex skills of consistent goal-achievement and metacognitive awareness are a must if a student is to learn how to be a self-directed learner. Here are five activities you can use in the classroom to help students become better self-directed learners.

**Focused autobiographical sketches.** One way to help students get a better grasp of their own study strengths is to ask them to write an autobiographical sketch about a time they learned the most during a study session. Ask students to describe where they studied, how long they studied, what their mindset was when going into the study sessions, and precisely what

they did while studying that made that session so effective. If students are asked to write about several such sessions, they can then begin to identify the most effective study patterns to use while directing their own learning program.

**Motivation logs.** Since motivation and affect are so important for learning, it might help students to develop the habit of reflecting on their own motivation, affect, and how what they are about to learn relates to their short- or long-term goals. For example, you may regularly ask students to answer several questions: On a scale of 1 to 10, how motivated am I as I start this study session or project? What can I do to get myself more motivated? What have I done in the past that allowed me to put in the required effort to learn even though I wasn't motivated at first? How is what I'm about to do related to my short or long term goals? Reflecting on this exercise over time, students can learn their most effective motivation strategies for studying.

**Productive study journals.** Students can use study journals to record their study habits over a certain time period. Students can record where and when they studied, their level of motivation at the start of the session, their goal for that session, and how long they studied. They can also record the most significant material they learned during that session, either about the material or about their learning process, and what they can do better for an upcoming session. If students are asked to keep a productive study journal for a good portion of the semester, they can potentially identify their most effective study patterns to use in the future. In effect, the productive study journal serves as a process analysis activity (knowing how and why) for a student's study process.

**Focused study strategy questions.** A simple approach to encourage self-directed learning is to ask your students periodically to answer the following questions: How much time

have I spent revising my notes from the last class? Was this enough time? How much time did I spend preparing for today's class session and what did I do to prepare? Was that enough time? How effective was that process? Again, if students are asked to do these several times a semester, they can complete a reflection activity at the end of the semester that asks them to pick out the most important things they have learned about their preparation habits, with more focus towards the time and process they might develop for their future learning program.

**Master strategy document.** You may decide to ask your students to maintain a master strategy document. For this assignment, a student is asked at the start of the course to develop a study strategy for the entire semester. Students should be precise in their writing: When will they study, where will they study, how long will their study sessions be, and so on. At the end of the first week, ask your students to evaluate how well they implemented their plan and how effective it was, then ask your students to revise their study strategy accordingly. Maintaining this master strategy document can work hand-in-hand with a productive study journal or with focused study strategy questions for a powerful strategic combination.

### Conclusion

In this chapter, we addressed three questions related to learning how to learn: how to be a better student, how to inquire and construct knowledge, and how to be a self-directed learner. We discussed several examples for each, including how to take better notes, how to communicate orally and through writing more effectively, and how a student can become a more independent learner. The preceding examples are just a sampling of the available teaching strategies for each of these areas, as many more exist among the teaching community. As an instructor, you should choose which activities best suit your teaching goals and



implement them accordingly. It is important to remember that every student will respond differently to each assignment and that you as the instructor may have to experiment with different assignments until you are content with the results.

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## Learner-Centered Instructional Strategies: A Crash Course

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### Abstract

Many students entering the university today are deficient in the 21st century skills of creative problem solving, effective oral and written communication, and critical thinking. In 2011, only 36 percent of college students demonstrated significant gains in critical thinking, analytic reasoning or written communication in four years of college, as measured by the Collegiate Learning Assessment (Arum & Roksa, 2011). The research tells us that if faculty want to prepare students' abilities as creative, analytical, problem solvers who can communicate effectively in an increasingly global world, collaborate well with others, and apply concepts across disciplines to solve complex problems, then they must rely less on lecturing as their major form of teaching. This chapter illustrates the alternatives to traditional college lecturing (e.g. project-based learning, design thinking, team-based strategies, "flipped" classrooms) and how the focus on student-centered learning and redesigned learning environments results in more independent, life-long learners.

*'The aim of education should be to teach us rather how to think, than what to think—rather to improve our minds, so as to enable us to think for ourselves...'*  
(Beattie, B., in Denbow, J., 2004, p. 19)

### **The Challenge**

Many students entering the university today are deficient in the 21st century skills of creative problem solving, effective oral and written communication, and critical thinking. In 2011, only 36 percent of college students demonstrated significant gains in critical thinking, analytic reasoning, or written communication in four years of college, as measured by the Collegiate Learning Assessment (Arum & Roksa, 2011). The President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities (PCAH) noted that American college students "...are increasingly the products of narrowed curricula, lacking the creative and critical thinking skills needed for success in life and work" (2011, vi). At the priority of higher test scores and global competitiveness, national standardized tests have placed our college students at risk in terms of their confidence as learners, believing that 'one right answer' is more important than divergent and self-directed learning.

Our college students' experiences in many K-12 testing-rich education systems have left them to be: (a) more comfortable with being told what to do; (b) anxious about dealing with a level of ambiguity (which in actuality will advance their creative and critical thinking); and (c) unused to doing the work as learners. Largely, U.S. educational practices have produced dependent, passive, and fearful learners who want to be told exactly what to think to pass a test, with teachers doing most of the work of the learning. This has happened as teachers decide the problems to be solved, identify what needs to be learned, prescribe learning methods, and use rigid assessment methods. Effective college teaching, if it is to truly develop

self-directed, independent, and responsible citizens capable of participating thoughtfully in a democracy, must address this gap.

### **Needs of Today's College Learners**

We do know that 21st century learning requires our students to be:

- Well-rounded, socially and emotionally intelligent, disciplined, moral, and culturally competent (Chapman, 2004)
- Diversely and creatively skilled (Le Metais, 2003)
- Possess the ability to know how to think over memorization of facts that will become obsolete (Weimer, 2002)
- Flexible and adaptive thinkers
- Creative, innovative, and independent thinkers
- Self-motivated, collaborative, risk takers (Gullatt, 2007).

The research tells us that if faculty want to prepare students' abilities as creative, analytical, problem solvers who can communicate effectively in an increasingly global world, collaborate well with others, and apply concepts across disciplines to solve complex problems, they must rely less on lecturing as their major form of teaching (Doyle, 2011; Fink, 2003; Partnership in 21st Century Skills, 2007). Lecturing does have its place in the university classroom, especially when talking to students about complex material they cannot learn on their own. However, used as a method of teaching in which students passively listen, then cram for exams and memorize material to prove they have "learned," lecturing is overall an ineffective way to develop 21st century students' creative, critical and practical thinking.

What are we, as teachers and guides to do? We can continue to follow traditional ways of teaching that often focus on covering content (content-centered) and developing memorized knowledge or we can embrace a vision of doing something different that “...would significantly improve the quality of student learning,” says Fink (2003, p. 1). Learning can no longer be defined by students’ ability for producing one right answer. Developing each student’s learning capacities requires more than thinking skills alone, as we know that cognitive development is a multifaceted process involving skills, dispositions, mindsets, and the learning environment, all affecting motivation (Claxton, 2006).

Our challenge as educators is to develop creative, autonomous, and more innovative, life-long learners who can integrate and apply their understandings to solving challenging questions of real world and personal consequence and can advance their own knowledge. To do so, it is important to consider a paradigm of learning that moves students from a passive approach to a shared and active one. We must focus our efforts on shifting most of the *work of learning* to students. Simply put, “It is the one who does the work, who does the learning” (Doyle, 2011, p. 7). This shift requires a greater emphasis on learner-centered rather than teacher-centered paradigms, where teachers do a lot of the work of learning. In this quest, we ask a few essential questions:

- How might we create learning environments and design learning experiences that aid students in developing their analytical, creative, and practical abilities—their successful intelligence?

- How might we develop students' creative and critical mindsets in tandem with social-emotional strengths and self-direction? What kinds of pedagogies and curriculum can bring about this balance?

### **Developing Balanced and Successful Intelligence**

Today's college professors must apply theory to practice in the ways that will build balanced and dynamic learners. The theoretical framework of "successful intelligence" or balanced intelligence is a good model for developing and assessing a balance of students' critical, creative, and practical thinking skills and dispositions (Sternberg, 2008; Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2004). This theory supports intelligence theories and cognitive science research which views learning as a complex, expandable, flexible system; it is affected by student self-beliefs and the culture in which one learns and in turn, affects motivation (Bransford et al., 2000; Gardner, 2007). One's learning ability is modifiable and expandable, not fixed (Resnick, 1999).

Balanced intelligence, rather than be attributed to critical thinking alone, is a balance of skills—critical, creative, and practical. All three are needed and support each other. Critical thinking refers to the process of analyzing and evaluating, solving problems, reasoning with evidence; creative thinking occurs when one uses imagination, finds new solutions, designs or creates a new idea or product. Practical thinking involves applying new knowledge in real life situations (including knowledge learned tacitly) in ethical ways, and it can be identified as social-emotional intelligence or one's ability to present ideas to others (Goleman, 1996).

Creativity is exercised when people take risks without fear of failure and challenge the status quo. Czikszenmihaly (1996) points to the educational environment in fostering

creativity. Additionally, the research tells us that critical and creative thinking operates in tandem—“like the right and left legs walking” (Paul & Elder, 2006, Foreward). One cannot be truly creative without activating critical thinking and vice versa. Both divergent and convergent thinking modes are needed in order to solve problems. Woven together, successful intelligence means it is not enough to memorize and analyze ideas. Students also need creative abilities to generate good ideas and the practical and positive social skills to persuade others of their value and successfully implement them.

Further, balanced intelligence is not simply a matter of acquiring a set of skills; it also involves the development of specific *dispositions*—the inclination, sensitivity and motivation to act upon one’s skills in multidisciplinary ways (Perkins & Ritchhart, 2004).

### **Developing Mindsets for Success**

Advances in cognitive science, including neuroscience, confirm that our thinking abilities are continually adapting to new information and expanding as we learn, grow, synthesize, and connect to new information (Caine & Caine, 1994). Aptitude is no longer considered equal to cognitive abilities; people’s capacity to learn also includes motivational and affective facets, or dispositions such as motivation, persistence, and risk-taking (over and above *ability*) that contribute to intellectual behavior and deep learning (Perkins & Ritchhart, 2004; Posner, Rothbart, Sheese & Kieras, 2008).

Dispositions can be defined as a collection of habits, behaviors, or attitudes that drive one’s patterns of thinking and show whether students are motivated to use the skills that they possess. Simply put, dispositions demonstrate that students are ready, willing, and able to use their skills. Claxton (2006) emphasizes that students’ “learning power” is comprised of a



collective mix of dispositions, lived experiences, social relations, values, attitudes, and beliefs that shape an individual's capabilities, and engagement (p. 10). According to Claxton (2006), the four key learning dispositions of powerful learning include resilience, resourcefulness, reflection, and reciprocity (or relationship). These dispositions, often fostered in more learner-centered environments, effect and expand students' overall capacity to learn and achieve. Thus, it is important to involve students in establishing learning goals that reward them for evidence of these dispositional factors and supports them in becoming directors of their own learning.

Sternberg (2008) highlights the three dispositional R's: reasoning, resilience, and responsibility:

- Reasoning (creative, critical, and analytical thinking; practical and wise thinking)
- Resilience (persistence and 'drive' to achieve goals despite life obstacles; self-efficacy: belief in one's ability/goals)
- Responsibility (ethics, wisdom, care, right action)

The learning environment strongly influences students' belief systems about their capabilities and potential as learners (Claxton, 2007; Resnick, 1999). Those who hold a belief that their abilities are expandable will achieve success, because they are willing to risk and engage in challenging tasks that affect their intelligence and achievement. *A culture that supports learning from failed attempts is vital.*

## Redesigning Learning Environments

*We won't meet the needs for more and better higher education until professors become designers of learning experiences and not teachers. – Larry Spence (2001, p. 2)*

As teachers, we are designers. We create new curriculum; we design deep learning experiences for students; we fashion cultures of learning that develop their creative confidence; we devise authentic ways to test. We are creating design solutions all the time, while also considering how learning occurs, our students' unique needs, and our goals for them as learners. Teachers design the kinds of learning experiences and environments that develop students' independent, creative, and flexible action.

In our goal to train students that possess a balance of creative, analytic, and practical skills and dispositions, teachers must be purposeful about the learning and thinking culture they create. Beyond dispensing the right course content, assuring that students 'learn' is an organic process—one that relies highly upon integration (connection making), student autonomy (self-direction), and individual and social expression (inquiry).

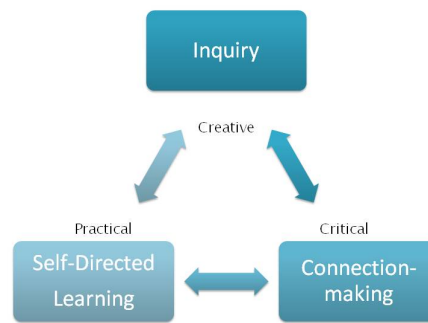
Teaching practices at every level, but explicitly at the college level, will require new paradigms of teaching and learning that move away from lecture-style pedagogies in order to truly engender the creative and critical capacities of our 21st century students. Research tells us that a learner-centered teacher can transform the college classroom environment (Weimer, 2002). In the university setting, a redesigned educational experience is needed that will foster creativity as well as learner autonomy (Cullen, Harris & Hill, 2012). A learner-centered paradigm has this potential.

### **Constructivism and Learner-Centered Philosophy**

Neuroscience, biology, and cognitive psychology inform us that learning, understood as deep understanding, cannot be imparted; it is a constructive and often social process. Learner-centered classrooms are inherently constructivist in theory, building on approaches to education, which contend that students should be actively involved in the learning process, rather than passively absorbing information that is imparted to them from teachers and textbooks. The focus is less on covering material and more on using content to develop new and personal ways of using it.

A learner-centered classroom shares ideals promoted by notable researchers in educational psychology and philosophy, including John Dewey (1938), who proposed that students should be self-directed and active learners. Piaget (1952) strengthened this work, as he recognized that knowledge is not acquired in a vacuum or by absorbing information; it is constructed through direct involvement and making connections to prior learning. Lev Vygotsky (1978) added the importance of social learning in cognitive development.

Learner-centered philosophy promotes students' deeper understanding, integrative understandings, and meaning making through first-hand experience or active learning and is supported by a vast research base indicating its effectiveness (Bransford et al., 2000; Cullen et al., 2012; Doyle, 2011; Fink, 2003; Weimer, 2002). In a balanced view, learner-centered goals build upon the pillars of connection-making, inquiry, and student self-direction (Ingalls Vanada, 2011). These ideas coincide with Sternberg's ideals of building students' creative, critical, and practical thinking skills (see *Figure 1*). As mentioned, learner-centered classrooms promote Sternberg's ideas (Claxton, 2006; Perkins & Ritchhart, 2004) along with deeper engagement.



*Figure 1.* Balanced Learning Environments

Rather than a strict content and discipline-focused approach, an LC curriculum is often organized around problems or complex big ideas: philosophical issues or theories of social concern that require multidisciplinary, authentic, real-life solutions (Constantino, 2002; Cullen et al., 2012). In these big-idea classrooms, students make connections from disparate sources and across disciplines, developing what Howard Gardner (2007, p. 45) calls, “a synthesizing mind.” They are engaged in inquiry-based and integrated learning methods, which enhance quality- thinking skills. This is a “learning with understanding” approach (Bransford et al., 2000, p. 8), wherein the explicit role of the teacher is to arouse motivation for investigative learning by provoking interest or challenging misconceptions and taken-for-granted beliefs. Since understanding is not merely imparted, active investigation is an essential activity—finding a problem, asking a question, and searching for knowledge to answer it. Not only does an LC classroom provide opportunities for more individualized student needs and interests, students are given more freedom to demonstrate their deeper understandings. *Figure 2* outlines primary learner-centered principles, with further information in Appendix A.

<b>Traditional Classrooms: Product-based (outcomes)</b>	<b>Learner-Centered Classrooms: Process-based (understanding)</b>
Focus on memorization/ rote-learning	Focus on engaging deeper & more meaningful learning
Focus on lower-level thinking	Focus on higher-order thinking: synthesis, analysis, evaluation, connection-making
Passive learning	Active learning
Teacher-centered: teacher as disseminator of knowledge	Student-centered: teacher as facilitator and coach
Culture of “one right answer”/ knowing	Culture of “thinking”/ learning/ questions
All students taught exactly the same	Learning is differentiated, made personal and meaningful
Fragmented, silo- curriculum	Interdisciplinary and integrated learning
Assessment goals set by teacher/school; mainly summative	Students involved in setting learning goals; mainly formative; demonstrations of understanding

Figure 2. Learner-centered principles

### Shifting to Learner-centeredness

*“If learning is regarded not as the acquisition of information, but as a search for meaning and coherence in one’s life and, if an emphasis is placed on what is learned and its personal significance to the learner, rather than how much is learned, researchers would gain valuable new insights....” – Philip Candy, 1991*

Much has been written about the impacting shift from a teacher-centered to learner-centered focus in the undergraduate classroom (Cullen et al., 2012; Doyle, 2011; Weimer, 2002). In a constructivist classroom, the teacher role shifts from being the source and dispenser of knowledge to becoming a facilitator, not a “sage on the stage” (Norman, 2000, p. 93).

Constructivist teachers consider themselves co-learners and guides who place the responsibility for learning in the hands of the students, knowing that “It is the one who does the work, who does the learning” (Doyle, 2011, p. 7). *Figure 3* provides a basic outline of the shift of power in an LC classroom.

	Teaching/Teacher Focus	Learning/Learner Focus
<b>Course Design</b>	What do <i>I</i> want to teach?	What do <i>students</i> need to learn?
<b>Teacher's Role</b>	What will <i>I</i> do to teach this material?	What will <i>students</i> do to learn this material? How will <i>students</i> be given more choice in what and how they learn?
<b>Success Criteria</b>	How well do <i>I</i> perform in the classroom?	How well do my <i>students</i> perform in and out of the classroom now and in the future?

*Figure 3.* (Adapted from Fink, 2003)

Learner-centered pedagogy, at its best, should be about helping students find success and satisfaction in approaching and accomplishing challenging tasks in which they are personally invested, emphasizing the internal factors of agency and self-efficacy. An educational goal for all college teachers is assisting students in their journey towards being able to define a sense of their own beliefs, identity, and relationships—essential toward constructing their own knowledge and future goals. These ideals are embodied in Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde’s (1998) *“Thirteen Principles of Best Practice,”* which promote their belief that all classrooms should be:

- Learner-centered (focus on students’ real interests, encourage student questions)
- Experiential (active, hands-on, and immersed in the content of every subject)
- Holistic (whole ideas, events and materials in purposeful contexts...not isolated)

- Authentic (real, rich, complex ideas)
- Expressive (use of communication: writing, drawing, poetry, dance, drama, music, movement, visual art, and the visual display of ideas)
- Reflective (immersion in experience and expression balanced with reflection)
- Social (learning as socially constructed)

In an LC approach, the goal is shared power and increased choices for students. Sharing power happens by providing choices in the policies and procedures of the classroom and by designing curriculum in ways that give students a say in what and how they learn, its relevance, as well as how they will demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. In so doing, teachers are placing the responsibility for learning in the hands of students—where it belongs—and “...optimizing their opportunity to choose to engage, participate, share, and work hard at the learning process” (Doyle, 2011, p. 78). Students are asked to take on more responsibility for their own learning, because they will be responsible for it the rest of their lives.

A primary goal, and essential to 21st century learning, is the development of student autonomy, self-direction, and creative confidence, which occur in more learner-centered college classrooms (Cullen et al., 2012). While many faculty members are not comfortable with sharing control with students, shared decision making is key to fostering a learning community and creates ownership for students, which in turn drives motivation, persistence and creativity. Pink’s research (2011) indicates that student performance is increased when three factors are present: autonomy, mastery, and purpose. Autonomy leads to deeper engagement, mastery of a concept or task creates a sense of accomplishment, and purpose feeds the learner’s need for relevance and rigor.

**Expect Pushback**

Students that have been conditioned for producing one right answer to pass a test may resist more active learning. Learner-centered educators commonly experience resistance on the part of students: (a) there is pushback as to the amount of work involved, even though students are more engaged with the content and develop autonomy as learners; (b) students experience anxiety at first, because projects are more ambiguous and individually focused, rather than tightly mandated by more traditional student-teacher roles. Most students are comfortable with controlled instruction in which they are told what to learn to pass a test. Many are afraid to be wrong, and their former learning experiences did not reward them for the *process* of learning, which often involves iterative failed attempts at something.

Too often, teachers are doing most of the work of learning. We decide the problems to be solved and the questions to be asked, deliver the content, create presentations, control (versus lead) the discussions, preview and summarize the learning content, and develop what to assess. Students push back when we do not. “Am I doing this right?” or “What exactly do you want in this assignment?” they ask. Stepping out of the spotlight and becoming a co-learner can be difficult for both the teacher and the student. Yet, shifting the *work* of learning to students is an intentional strategy that serves to develop students’ personal autonomy, creative confidence, desire to learn, and sustained motivation—factors that are found to further predict and effect levels of learning and achievement (McCombs & Miller, 2007).

**The Role of the Teacher**

This decentralization of power in the classroom means that teachers become co-learners and guides, with students viewed as active participants in the construction of



knowledge. For learner-centered practice to be effective, roles of faculty and students will change to:

- Students are empowered to assume more responsibility for their learning
- Teachers design and orchestrate learning investigations
- Faculty and students are learners – they both give and receive
- Learners bring more ideas and viewpoints (two-way learning)
- Learners bring substantive expertise (authentic contribution to the whole) (Mayer, 1999)

As a learner-centered teacher, the design challenge lies in providing a context or framework that provides enough structure yet gives students authentic choices about their assignments and demonstrations of learning. In designing and orchestrating learning investigations, students must be nudged out of their comfort zones and access their skills and abilities for original thought and decision making; this is part of the work of learning that can develop their skills as balanced thinkers and doers. Eisinger (2011, p. 2) says, “What is too often missing in the university classroom, is an understanding of the abstract and the ambiguous,” encouraging faculty to incorporate purposeful “untidy open-ended exercises” and to “*teach ambiguity*” in order to creatively engage students in the social and political tensions of a democratic society. If a level of ambiguity is purposefully designed into students’ learning experiences, they are more likely to exercise their abilities to question, make connections, and re-think possible solutions and innovative ideas. If our goal as teachers is the recall of facts, we are not equipping students in areas of problem finding and complex problem solving.

Research indicates valuable links between designing open-ended, project-based inquiries that allow relevance, meaning, and student motivation. It is the quality of the experience that counts, and, “Teachers cannot merely transmit information or skill...the teacher needs to behave like an environmental designer, creating situations that will, in turn, create an appetite to learn” (Eisner, 2002, p. 50). There may be less focus on the end product (typically the first step in most teachers’ planning), and more on students’ explorations into the big ideas teachers set forth—philosophical issues or theories of social concern, within a problem-based environment for learning. “Problem-based learning can organize the curriculum and challenge students to think deeply about complex situations, when it is applied as an authentic real-life application,” states Constantino (2002, p. 224).

LC teachers involve students in finding problems that lead to inquiry- driven investigations related to big ideas of cultural depth and cultural capacity, thus making connections in the process. Students must be the ones to *frame* the problems being solved! Fink (2003, p. 104) outlines active modes of learning (versus passive learning of receiving information and ideas) that are designed into the curriculum to include doing, observing, and reflecting:

- Doing: any learning activity that involves students in designing and conducting investigations, connecting ideas, engaging in a real or simulated action in an authentic settings, making oral presentations, analyzing and synthesizing ideas, writing essays, etc.
- Observing: watching, listening, or experiencing demonstrations or real-life examples of whatever they are learning about

- Reflecting: making meaning by consciously reflecting alone or dialoging with others, journaling, visual reflections, etc.

### **Learner-Centered Goals**

As communities of learning, learner-centered classrooms promote student choice, student ownership and responsibility, connection making, and opportunities for inquiry-driven processes. Even in very large university classes, LC strategies can promote the three pillars of learner-centeredness (Ingalls Vanada, 2011):

- Self-direction: Submission of discussion postings and accessing course readings through the online management system; classroom attendance; reviewing posted class materials to study for exams (vs. study guide); self-assessments;
- Connection-making: Reading of assigned articles and expectation for preparedness; provocative journal entries and personal art making; authentic assessments;
- Inquiry: Promote dialogue through Socratic questioning or other dialogic processes; discussions in class; first-hand observation; doing to learn.

To promote dialogue, Socratic questioning is offered as a pedagogical tool for exploring alternative points of view, investigating big ideas, and activating cognitive processing (Caine & Caine, 1994). One key aspect of a learner-centered class is that participants are given opportunities to reflect on what and how they learn, as well as their own creativity and thinking processes. Journaling is a significant way for students to link to prior knowledge and share their insights, as they write and use other creative means (McCombs & Miller, 2007).

Also, it is important to consider the incorporation of course goals that focus on the development of 21st century skills and dispositions, such as:

- **Critical Thinking:** Problem solving requires application of learning and creativity to a specific area of inquiry. Preceded by a set of skills, a critical thinking skill focuses on the essential elements of a problem, sorts through data for relevant information, and applies the dispositions of persistence and tolerance to work within ambiguous situations, with flexibility and self-direction. In addition, problem solving involves the ability to tap into the expertise of others in order to solve complex problems (social/emotional dimension).
- **Creativity and Innovation:** Creativity is essential for successful intelligence; creative skills help foster a vision for students and can make the world a better place along with needed analytic and practical skills and wisdom.
- **Communication and Collaboration:** Innovation has a social component and requires adaptability, leadership, teamwork, and interpersonal skills. Our creative and critical capacities are linked to the ability to connect with others. 21<sup>st</sup> century students must be able to clearly articulate their ideas, work with diverse teams, make necessary compromises to accomplish a common goal, and other communication competencies (Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, 2007).

### **Active and Experiential Learning Methods**

Some forms of active, experiential learning may include (Fink, 2003, p. 20):

- Role-playing, simulation, debate, and case studies
- Writing to Learn
- Small Group Learning
- Assessment as Learning
- Problem- and Project-based Learning

- Service Learning
- Design-based Learning (Design Thinking)

**Assessment as learning.** Assessment as learning occurs when students reflect and monitor their progress to inform their future learning goals. It is regularly occurring, formal or informal (e.g. peer feedback buddies, formal self assessment) and helps students take responsibility for their own past and future learning. It builds metacognition as it involves students in understanding the standards expected of them by setting and monitoring their own learning goals as well as developing strategies for working towards achieving them.

(<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/support/pages/module4.aspx>)

**Problem-based learning.** In a problem-based learning (PBL) model, students engage complex, challenging problems and collaboratively work toward resolutions. PBL is about students connecting disciplinary knowledge to real-world problems—the motivation to solve a problem becomes the motivation to learn. Problem-based learning typically follows these steps:

- Presentation of an "ill-structured" (open-ended, "messy") problem
- Problem definition or formulation (the problem statement)
- Generation of a "knowledge inventory" (a list of "what we know about the problem" and "what we need to know")
- Generation of possible solutions
- Formulation of learning issues for self-directed and coached learning
- Sharing of findings and solutions ([http://bie.org/about/what\\_pbl](http://bie.org/about/what_pbl))

**Project-based learning.** This type of learning is an approach to learning focusing on developing a product or creation. The project may or may not be student-centered, problem-

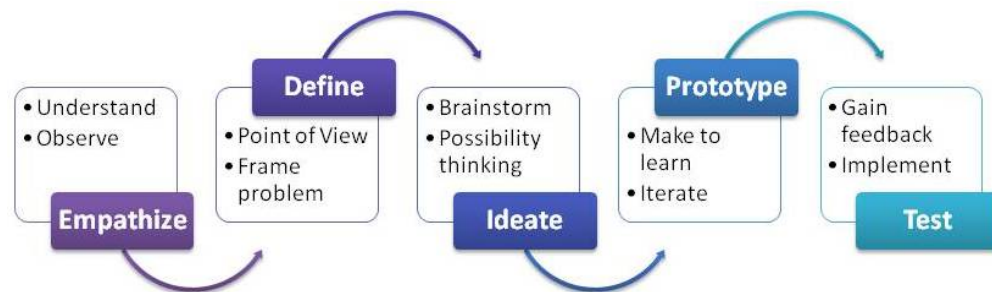
based, or inquiry-based. Project-Based Learning is a teaching method in which students gain knowledge and skills by working for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to a complex question, problem, or challenge. Essential Elements of PBL include:

- **Significant Content** - At its core, the project is focused on teaching students important knowledge and skills, derived from standards and key concepts at the heart of academic subjects.
- **Driving Question** - Project work is focused by an open-ended question that students understand and find intriguing, which captures their task or frames their exploration.
- **Need to Know** - Students see the need to gain knowledge, understand concepts, and apply skills in order to answer the Driving Question and create project products, beginning with an Entry Event that generates interest and curiosity.
- **Voice and Choice** - Students are allowed to make some choices about the products to be created, how they work, and how they use their time, guided by the teacher and depending on age level and PBL experience.
- **Critique and Revision** - The project includes processes for students to give and receive feedback. ([http://bie.org/about/what\\_pbl](http://bie.org/about/what_pbl))

**Design-based learning.** One way to engage students in authentic, inquiry-driven, collaborative, project- and problem-based learning is through the method of design-based learning that utilizes the process of “design thinking.” Design thinking, as related to constructivist paradigms, learner-centered pedagogy, and project-based learning is considered a collaborative, problem-solving framework that promotes deep and relevant learning (Carroll, Goldman, Britos, Koh, Royalty & Hornstein, 2010, Ingalls Vanada, 2013). Also found to promote critical thinking, creativity, integrative connection making, and student self-direction, design thinking processes work to engage students in empathic inquiries and solving problems of social interest in an integrated way. Seeking for ways to meet human needs fosters empathy.

Design thinking is aligned with active and experiential learning; it has long focused on processes familiar to students in schools of art and architecture: the posing of a problem, which is ambiguous or open-ended with some constraints. Thus for teachers, design thinking requires a pedagogical shift toward learning that is: (a) human-centered; (b) action oriented; and (c) process-oriented (Carroll et al., 2010).

Design thinking phases include: (a) developing understanding and empathy through observation and need finding, (b) problem solving, (c) generating multiple possibilities, (d) prototyping, then (e) testing solutions. The key phases of the design thinking process, as identified by the Hasso Plattner Institute of Design or “d.school” are shown in *Figure 2*.



*Figure 2.* Overview of the design thinking process (d. school as cited in Carroll et al., 2010)

Using design thinking methods as a form of inquiry and research, the teacher-student relationship is decentralized, as the classroom government and decisions are shared. DT methods provide enough structure, while allowing for student autonomy and choice as students design solutions, construct knowledge by problem solving, learn from mistakes, reflect, and engage in iterative solutions.

### Conclusion

In order to equip students toward success in learning and life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there has been a recognized need for college classroom environments that value critical, creative,

and practical thinking and serve to build students' confidence and overall capacities as life-long learners. In the privilege of assisting students in their educational and life goals, we also face the challenge of building students' mindsets for success and social-emotional growth.

Toward this end, this chapter has explored the various ways that learner-centered pedagogy encourages questioning, fosters balanced, deep and collaborative learning, and changes the narrow canon of assessment practices. We've looked at the kinds of pedagogies and curriculum that can bring about powerful learning in our students, to promote their self-direction, self-efficacy, confidence, motivation, and desire to learn—having the most impact when teachers are role models of curiosity, open-mindedness, and shared power (McCombs & Miller, 2007; Weimer, 2002).

The shelf life of knowledge is shorter than ever in our information-rich society, making the learning of facts less important than teaching students how to think, problem-solve, create, evaluate, and work in teams. As we face the challenge and privilege of training successful college graduates—escalated from 3 percent to 32 in the last 100 years—we are called to participate in a paradigm shift in the role we play at this pivotal point in their lives (Spence, 2001). It is not a call to arms as much as it is a call to risk.

We come to the end of this chapter with more questions: If our primary role as a teacher is considered to promote students' lifelong learning skills as well as the confidence and motivation to use those skills, what kinds of teaching, learning investigations (assignments), and classroom environment factors must we consider? How will course design change? How might we encourage students to assume more responsibility for their own learning? How might



course content become more than something we cover—and become the means rather than the end?

One thing is sure. This path to building a more learner-centered, big idea classroom requires a vision of what can be. Students will need to understand why it is important for them to build a balance of their thinking skills and dispositions—that they are more than passive consumers; they are active creators and designers of their futures. To foster buy-in for a more investigative, integrative, reflective, and active ways of learning, sameness will be questioned. Students will need to be rewarded for flexing their “learning power” muscles (Claxton, 2006, p. 1), and we applaud your efforts in moving teaching to a different and more learner-centered place.

In Appendix B, you will find links and opportunities in a variety of learner-centered strategies that can be integrated into your coursework. To incorporate even one idea or part of these ideas is a worthwhile adventure in developing more independent, life-long learners.

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## Appendix A

### Basic Learner Centered Principles

1. Transfer of energy to students doing the work of learning. The ancient Chinese proverb, “I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand,” holds learner-centered truth. Develop student autonomy and self-regulation by intentionally crafting self-reflection, self-observation, self-judgment, and self-reaction into courses (Zimmerman & Schunk, 1994 as cited in Cullen et al., 2012).
2. Shifting power. This shift is one of the most difficult things for many teachers, yet students are empowered when they are allowed to choose and to assume more responsibility for their learning. Give students a VOICE! Let them define the problems that need solving when it comes to learning, education. The brain attaches to ideas of deep personal meaning and relevance, so students need to be involved in the problem finding. It can’t be the teacher’s decision alone. Empower them to be the change they want to see in the world.
  - Faculty and students are learners – they both give and receive. Adopt an “I bring something, you bring something” approach.
  - Learners bring more ideas and viewpoints (two-way learning) and substantive expertise (authentic contribution to the whole).
3. Active Learning: In order for student to do the work of learning, we have to guide, but allow them to make mistakes to learn! Let them get it wrong and reward revision, growth, and reflection on what has been learned from mistakes. Provide an environment for safe risk-taking with teachers who can provide guidance, ask good

questions, scaffold the learning, and provide a rigorous pace. Experience is the best teacher, and real-world experience is even better.

## **Appendix B**

### **Alternative Instructional Strategies Resource Guide**

To make students *active learners* requires that you sometimes “let go” of the best-prepared lectures and course content. The following links demonstrate examples of learner-centered activities that can be integrated into your course – even adding one learner-centered activity can put you on the road towards “flipping” the classroom.

#### **Alternative Strategies and Active Learning**

This link references a 3-page document that is adapted from *Teaching at Carolina* (1998). Chapel Hill: Center for Teaching and Learning, University of North Carolina. This summary provides suggestions in peer teaching, case studies, simulations, cooperative learning groups, and peer teaching. In each category, there are suggestions for learner-centered activities for multiple disciplines. For example, case studies “are appropriate for learning about information analysis, decision making, or problem solving.” The example is for anthropology, but the techniques can be applied to a myriad of courses.

[http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/teaching/Teaching\\_Strategies.pdf](http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/teaching/Teaching_Strategies.pdf)

Another good resource is the collection of exercises and techniques illustrated in “Active and Cooperative Learning” site by Dr. Donald Paulson and Jennifer Faust. Each technique is illustrated with an exercise and an evaluation tool.

<http://web.calstatela.edu/dept/chem/chem2/Active/>



### **The Flipped Classroom**

This colorful “infographic” illustrates how the “flipped” model works and gives a brief history and current successful examples. A lively discussion follows with teachers weighing in on the pros and cons – and whether this model is a new approach at all.

<http://www.knewton.com/flipped-classroom/>

### **“Welcome to the Virtual Crash Course in Design Thinking”**

The d.school at Stanford has an innovative “crash course” in Design Thinking: in ninety minutes, participants are taken through “The Gift-Giving Project: a fast-paced project where participants pair up to interview each other, identify real needs, and develop a solution to ‘redesign the gift-giving experience’ for their partner. The three-part experience breaks down the basic components of Design Thinking and shows how it can be applied in both small and large-group sections. <http://dschool.stanford.edu/dgift/>

An excellent book on the power of design thinking in the classroom:

Kelley, T. & Kelley, D. (2013). *Creative confidence: Unleashing the creative potential within us all*. New York: Random House Publishers.

### **“The Importance of Student Journals and How to Respond Efficiently”**

This *Edutopia* article seeks to answer the question, “How do I possibly have time to respond to student journals?” While this article is written for high school teachers, the principles of “journal coding” can be applied to any subject matter at any level.

<http://www.edutopia.org/blog/student-journals-efficient-teacher-responses>

**Alternative Web-Based Instructional Strategies: Creative, Critical, Cooperative**

Web-based instruction is nothing new, and Moodle provides a number of opportunities to encourage learner-centered activities. In *Web-based Instruction*, edited by Badrul Huda Khan, the authors suggest that the Internet should be used as a creative tool to help students “...sense gaps in information, make guesses and hypotheses, test and revise ideas, and communicate results.”

**Team-Based Strategies**

The Team-Based Learning Collaborative is an interactive site with a variety of resources (large-classroom ideas, video, text) that focuses on how teams can help make active learning possible, even in the large lecture hall. A short twelve-minute video is a good introduction to the basic principles. The Collaborative also hosts conferences and provides research grants.

<http://www.teambasedlearning.org>

Another excellent resource is the Collaborative Learning Techniques Workshop, presented by Bill Cerbin, April 23, 2010, Center for Advancing Teaching and Learning. This document link below addresses concerns about collaborative/team-based learning, including questions on grading and monitoring groups. There are additional resources, links, and references contained in the document.

<http://www.uwlax.edu/catl/studentlearning/presentations/collaborativelearningtechniqueshandout.pdf>

## Methods to Help Students Create Original Work

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### Abstract

This chapter defines what original work means to a student from a faculty perspective. Faculty must be diligent in exemplifying original work and promoting the value of original work. We address both proactive and reactive strategies to plagiarism, including methods to educate students and design assignments. Recommendations on mechanisms to identify plagiarism, gather evidence and possible penalties are also included. Finally, we outline several methods that faculty teaching large, high-demand courses could use to promote students' critical thinking and original work.

### **Introduction**

Many students find it difficult to create original work (Kazerounian & Foley, 2007). With the advent of the Internet and easy access to electronic sources, plagiarism has become a vast problem at many universities and colleges (Selwyn 2008). Plagiarism can be exacerbated when assignments only require students to demonstrate content knowledge and not conceptual understanding (McKillup & McKillup, 2007). Here, we outline several methods that faculty teaching large, high-demand courses could use to promote students' critical thinking, creativity, and original work.

### **Defining Original Work**

As students move from secondary education to college, we as faculty must carefully consider this transition. Depending on their background, students often have had few opportunities to engage in generating original work as our traditional educational system often focuses on memorization. Current technologies may further push students away from creativity and promote the idea that with the click of a button they can find out any information. This process happens so fast and easily that students expect that producing a term paper should also happen in an instant. Cutting and pasting ideas into a paper without synthesis of the material serves only to earn a grade. Original work examples will vary depending on the discipline, but research papers or portfolios are some examples of a project a student can generate. No matter what the medium, original work must be clearly defined in the context of the course and subject matter. Why is original work important for learning, and how can we promote this?

### **Helping Students Understand the Value of Original Work**

The value of original work extends beyond the classroom and the student's academic career. This skill is essential for success in life and work. Developing respect for others' work and intellectual property is imperative for successful transition out of the academic world. As instructors, we must help students understand this importance by requiring original work generated and by placing value on this type of work.

### **Using Original Work to Facilitate Learning**

First, we have a responsibility to model behaviors that are important in generating original work. This might involve demonstrating quality writing, citation methodology, and referencing of material and providing access to examples of original work. Clear expectations and instructions must be provided for the students from the first day forward. We also must be cognizant of the issues surrounding why students may be challenged to produce original work. Lack of experience, time constraints, ease of information availability, and many other factors all lead to students submitting work that may not be original. By setting boundaries and deadlines and by being creative in the development of the assignment, some of the major issues that favor plagiarism and misconduct can be minimized.

### **Original Work Resources for Instructors and Students**

1. <http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/educators/how-to/tipsheets/student-critique.aspx>
2. <http://www.teachingcopyright.org>
3. [http://turnitin.com/en\\_us/features/originalitycheck](http://turnitin.com/en_us/features/originalitycheck)
4. <http://teaching.uncc.edu/learning-resources/articles-books/best-practice/critical-thinking>
5. <http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k70847&pageid=icb.page342048>

### **Original Work and Plagiarism**

Anytime students are tasked with creating original work, there is the chance that some of them will plagiarize portions of their final product (or perhaps even the entire product!). As such, we should think about how they will approach and deal with plagiarism in their classes. We can adopt two approaches to dealing with plagiarism in their classes. The first is a proactive approach that utilizes a number of steps designed to prevent plagiarism from happening. These strategies mainly fall under the umbrellas of educating students about plagiarism and designing assignments to discourage plagiarism. The second approach is reactive and involves policing students work for instances of plagiarism. While this approach is less desirable than being proactive, it is sometimes necessary. An effective strategy for dealing with plagiarism will probably use a combination of both approaches.

#### **Educating Students about Plagiarism**

One of the most important things we can do to prevent plagiarism is to initiate an open dialog about plagiarism with our students. All too often, we assume that students have already learned about plagiarism. However, this may not always be the case. In addition, while some students may have discussed plagiarism in previous courses, they may have forgotten the details. Also, students' experiences with different classes or instructors may send mixed messages about plagiarism. Consequently, it is worth spending some time, either in or outside of class, talking about plagiarism to ensure that everyone is on the same page. Finally, even if students have been taught about plagiarism, constantly and consistently learning about it throughout their college career reinforces a climate where plagiarism is clearly not tolerated.

An important starting point is to discuss what constitutes plagiarism. Students often have no problem recognizing that cutting and pasting large portions of work from other sources or purchasing papers from a paper mill constitute plagiarism. However, their understanding of other issues (e.g. how to paraphrase, when to use quotes, how much material they can use from other sources, what constitutes common knowledge, whether they can recycle portions of work from other classes) may not be as clear. Indeed Power (2009:650) notes that while most students are able to define plagiarism, “they have only a superficial understanding of what that means and a therefore a (sic) difficult time applying that definition in real situations.” If students are going to avoid plagiarism, the first step is that they are able to recognize its myriad of forms.

We should also discuss why plagiarism is so problematic in higher education. This is especially important given that millennials may not share faculty views about the importance of authorship. Students raised in the digital age, where information is a click away and authorship is not always obvious, have different views about the creation of knowledge (Calvert Evering and Moorman 2012). Assuming they view plagiarism as problematic, students may view it as a victimless crime (Power 2009). We can help students understand that knowledge, ideas, and information are the coin of the realm in academia. As such, it is paramount to give people credit for their intellectual work. Students need to understand that plagiarizing is like theft, even when done unintentionally.

We should also make sure they are clear about what the penalties are for engaging in plagiarism. This is especially important given that there may be wide variations from class to class. We should have clear and consistent policies and these should be spelled out in the

syllabus. We may also want to refer or link to these policies in assignments where students might plagiarize. This helps send a clear message that plagiarism is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. When students understand the price they pay if they are caught plagiarizing, they are less likely to engage in it.

Some of us may find that they simply do not have time in class to devote to discussions of plagiarism. Fortunately, there are a number of resources online that we can use to develop students' understanding of what constitutes plagiarism. These resources can be assigned to students to review outside of class. If we do pursue this route, it is good ideas to have students complete an exercise that is linked to the online tutorial. Many widely used plagiarism tutorials have quizzes embedded in them.

Having students complete plagiarism quizzes can be a useful part of any discussion of plagiarism, even ones that happen during class time. Quizzes can be used for both formative and summative assessment of students' understanding of plagiarism. The quizzes can be used as a teaching tool to reinforce information. Requiring students to know the correct answers (e.g. they have to keep answering until they get it right; you go over answers in class and have them correct theirs; provide feedback for each question), serves to reinforce information about plagiarism. This practice can also provide us with real time feedback about how well students grasp the concepts and strategies that are being covered. Finally, if we keep the corrected quizzes (where all of the correct answers are recorded), then we can use quizzes in the discussions to portray actual instances of plagiarism. It is difficult for a student to claim that they never knew that X was an instance of plagiarism when the instructor can hold up a quiz,



with correct answers, indicating that the student answered a question correctly that stated that X clearly constitutes plagiarism.

One of the first steps in being proactive about preventing plagiarism is talking about with students. If students understand the myriad forms plagiarism can take (why it is problematic in higher education) and the consequences for doing it, they may be less likely to engage in the practice. Educating students about plagiarism can be accomplished in and out of class using a low stakes assignment that culminates in a quiz. After helping students understand what plagiarism is and why it matters, faculty then need to provide students with strategies to help them avoid engaging in it.

### **Strategies for Avoiding Plagiarism**

We can also take a proactive approach towards plagiarism by being strategic about the design of these assignments. These steps fall largely into two categories. The first centers on instructional design. There are things we can do when designing and discussing assignments that will lessen the temptation to plagiarize and make it more difficult to do so. We should also work with students on strategies that will help them avoid plagiarizing unintentionally.

Perhaps the most heavily plagiarized type of assignment is the large research project (e.g. a 15 page paper) that is discussed mid-semester and then not mentioned again in class until it is due the last week of class. In this model, the project involves a lot of work and the stakes are high. There is also very little class time spent discussing and/or working on the project. This creates a situation where students' poor time management, procrastination, and feelings of inadequacy may contribute to plagiarism. The further we can move away from this model, the less likely students will be able to plagiarize.

One widely cited reason students give when asked why they plagiarize is that they did not have enough time to complete the project. We often scoff at this reason, noting that there was enough time at start of the large assignment, unless the student started it at the last minute when there is not enough time. One way to reduce the chances that students procrastinate (and then see their only way out is plagiarism) is to walk students through the research process step by step. If they have to turn in shorter products along the way (e.g. a paragraph stating their research topic, a bibliography of potential sources, summaries the sources, a revised research question, portions of rough drafts, etc.) then this will reduce the temptation to plagiarize because students will not be working on project at the last minute. This also has the added benefit of actually modeling that research is a process, not simply a product (e.g. final paper), a reality that many students do not understand. Finally, because students have been turning in short drafts and summaries that will eventually become part of their final product (and may have received feedback on some of these) they will have more confidence that they have the skills to complete a large-scale project. An excellent resource that discusses some of the things we can do when designing assignments can be found at [http://academics.adelphi.edu/academicintegrity/pdfs/prevent\\_plagiarism.pdf](http://academics.adelphi.edu/academicintegrity/pdfs/prevent_plagiarism.pdf).

We should equip students with these strategies as they are conducting research. An easy, yet highly effective strategy is to encourage students to take notes during the research process. As students take notes, they should do three things. First, after reading a text, students should close it and then write their notes without referring to it. After they have completed writing their notes, they should then check what they have written against the text to make sure they have re-written the ideas in their own words. If their writing is too close to the

original, they should rewrite it. Second, if a student is using a passage verbatim, their notes should clearly indicate that this is a direct quote. Third, they should include complete citations for all sources. Using well written notes as students are writing up their research will decrease the chances they will unintentionally plagiarize by paraphrasing too closely, forgetting that something is a direct quote, or not being able to cite where information came from.

Finally, we can use TurnItIn.com as a teaching tool to help students detect unintentional plagiarism in their drafts. We can require students to submit drafts of their work to TurnItIn.com (available on Moodle). Students should then view the originality report that TurnItIn.com generates. This can help students detect where citations are missing, see if they rely too heavily on direct quotes, and see if their paraphrasing is too close to the original. For technical advice about how to do this visit the TurnItIn.com webpage at [http://turnitin.com/en\\_us/training/instructor-training#quickstart3](http://turnitin.com/en_us/training/instructor-training#quickstart3).

### **Detecting Plagiarism**

It is an unfortunate reality of higher education that if you teach long enough, even if you follow best practices to avoid plagiarism, you will have instance of students plagiarizing some, if not all of their work. As such, we should be mindful that plagiarism is an ever-present reality in higher education and keep an eye open for it. Some clues that students have plagiarized portions of their work are:

- Writing style and/or quality shifts abruptly.
- The student is using an uncharacteristic writing style and/or vocabulary.
- The content of the assignment is slightly off topic.

- The text changes formatting/font in the middle of a paper (clues it was cut and pasted from the internet).
- Paper contains information that is not common knowledge but lacks a citation (often an example of unintentional plagiarism).

Once you suspect a student has plagiarized, how do you actually prove it without spending an inordinate amount of time?

Before you accuse a student of plagiarism, it is a good idea to have proof that their work is plagiarized. If you cannot immediately identify the source of the material, there are two strategies that may help. One is to simply Google a phrase or sentence to see if it pops up. Students who cut and paste liberally from the internet rarely dig deep. Instead, they cut and paste from the first few pages. The second option is to use TurnItIn.com to identify passages that are not original and detect where they may have come from. The final step in dealing with plagiarism is to impose the consequences outlined in your syllabus.

It is important to acknowledge that there are different degrees of plagiarism done for different reasons (not changing original wording enough but including a citation is very different from copying and pasting entire sections from the internet with the intent of passing it off as your own writing). As such, one punishment does not fit all instances of plagiarism. Because plagiarism can encompass a myriad of practices, some intentional some not, some large scale some small, you should use your judgment about how and when to impose the penalties outlined in your syllabus.

In egregious cases of intentional plagiarism (e.g. papers from paper mills, multiple lengthy passages cut and pasted from the internet), we should consider filing a grievance with

UNC Charlotte's academic integrity board. The procedures for doing this are specific in University policy 407, Code of Student Academic Integrity. This policy requires faculty to follow a formal settlement procedure when they detect instances of intentional plagiarism (<http://legal.uncc.edu/policies/up-407>). The first step in this settlement procedure is to contact the Dean of Students Office to see whether this is the student's first offense. If it is the student's first offense, then you can decide whether to use the settlement form or whether to take the case to the Academic Integrity Board (AIB). If the student already has at least one academic integrity violation on file, you must bring the offense to the AIB. A detailed description of these settlement procedures can be found <http://legal.uncc.edu/sites/legal.uncc.edu/files/media/aicsettlementform.pdf>.

### **Creating Original Work: Research Methods**

#### **Method 1: Using Published Materials as a Catalyst for Original Ideas**

Library research can help promote critical understanding of course material, but instructors may not be familiar with how to incorporate library research into their instruction to promote critical thinking and foster original ideas. Here, we outline the basic approach to using library research to enhance learning in the classroom.

Before committing students to a library research assignment, it is important that students have the content knowledge necessary to make the assignment a productive learning exercise. First, clearly define the purpose and utility of the assignment to the students. Second, define the questions that students should address. Also encourage students to pursue their own relevant questions. And third, clearly outline the approach that students should take to answer

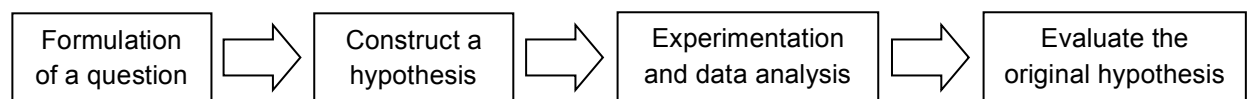
the proposed questions. Utilizing the helpful resources provided by the UNC Charlotte's library, this is the general approach for completing a library research assignment:

1. Define the subject area of the questions to be addressed.
2. Select the subject area from the list of library research guides:  
<http://guides.library.uncc.edu/>
3. Follow the area specific research guide to complete the literature review.
4. Follow the citation and style guide: <http://guides.library.uncc.edu/CitationGuides> to avoid plagiarism and correctly cite literary sources,

Keep in mind that students can access books, articles, and numerous databases directly from the library's homepage: <http://library.uncc.edu/>. After using keywords to search, students can access scientific articles by using their UNC Charlotte login. Students also can access subscribed databases and journals from off campus using this approach.

### **Method 2: Using the Scientific Method to Stimulate Original Thinking**

The scientific method is a standardized approach used in many academic disciplines to promote original work. The following flow chart shows the basic steps of the scientific method:



The scientific method starts with a critical observation and/or background research in an area of study, which leads to a specific research question. Next, a testable hypothesis is formulated. Keep in mind that a hypothesis is *not* an “educated guess.” A hypothesis should be based on background research and current information and data. It should never be a guess. Moreover, a

hypothesis should be a concise, explanatory statement about causality (e.g., study time affects exam scores). Usually, explicit predictions are made based on the hypothesis to guide the experimental approach and data analysis (e.g., students who spend more time studying will receive higher exam scores). After the experiments are conducted, collected data are used to evaluate the predictions and original hypothesis.

The scientific method could be used in any classroom to help foster critical thinking and encourage students to create original work. For more on how to use the scientific method in your classroom, please review the following useful web pages:

- Overview of the scientific method, Wiley.com:  
[http://www.wiley.com/college/test/0471787159/biology\\_basics/animations/scientificMethod.swf](http://www.wiley.com/college/test/0471787159/biology_basics/animations/scientificMethod.swf)
- Understanding science (How science really works), University of California, Berkeley: <http://undsci.berkeley.edu/>
- Teaching the scientific method, Arizona State University:  
<http://askabiologist.asu.edu/teaching-scientific-method>

### **Method 3: Debate, Discuss, and Present Original Work and Ideas**

In this section, we outline three activities that could be used in the classroom to encourage students to share and discuss original work. These activities should be used in conjunction with the methods discussed above. Students are often reluctant to present their work in front of peers, and it could be helpful to allow students to collaborate in small groups. Additionally, group-based activities can significantly decrease the amount of time needed in class to complete student-centered activities. For more information on how to develop group-

based activities in the college classroom, please see the information presented in this excellent website, Center for Teaching Excellence, Cornell University

<http://www.cte.cornell.edu/teaching-ideas/engaging-students/collaborative-learning.html>. We

will now briefly discuss the three activities that can help students to share original work and ideas:

- Student debates.
- Student academic talks.
- Student poster sessions.

**Student debates.** This allows students to collaborate in conducting background research, learn how to critically use and evaluate information, and promote discussion that can enhance student participation and learning. Though conducting a dynamic debate is difficult, with planning and practice any instructor can lead an engaging debate. Here is useful information on how to prepare and lead a student debate (Northern Illinois University):

[http://www.niu.edu/facdev/resources/guide/strategies/classroom\\_debates.pdf](http://www.niu.edu/facdev/resources/guide/strategies/classroom_debates.pdf). It is important that students perform the necessary background research prior to the debate. Students should only use scientific facts, data, and graphs to support their position. Students should not appeal to emotion. Encourage audience members to take notes during the debate and ask focused questions at the end of the debate. Student engagement is essential to enhance the learning potential of the activity.

**Student Academic Talks.** Another activity to encourage the sharing of original work is providing students with an opportunity to give a formal academic talk. Unlike a typical class presentation, an academic talk forces students to learn the methods for conveying information



in the most efficient and effective manner. Students also learn how to create concise, information rich, and uncluttered presentation slides. This very useful publication will help students to prepare and give an academic talk:

<http://pne.people.si.umich.edu/PDF/howtotalk.pdf>.

**Student Poster Sessions.** Lastly, an excellent activity to allow students to present original work is by organizing a poster session. Allow students to work in small groups to create conference posters using the information they obtained through experimental or library research. On the day of the poster session, have half of the students set up their posters and the remaining half to visit and evaluate the presentations. After the first round, switch the groups. This comprehensive resource will help students to create and give an excellent poster presentation: <http://www.ncsu.edu/project/posters/>.

### Conclusion

Helping students to become independent thinkers and to create original work is a difficult task in any class. We instructors of large, high-demand courses too often rely on lecture-based presentation to teach students. Studies have shown that lecture based presentation is not the most effective way to help students learn (Freeman et al., 2014). We should engage students intellectually and encourage students to actively use and synthesize information to create original ideas. In this chapter, we outlined three active learning activities to help students create and present original work: (a) using published materials as a catalyst for original ideas; (b) using the scientific method to stimulate original thinking; and (c) debate, discuss, and present original work and ideas. We provided the most relevant and essential web-based resources to help instructors incorporate the recommended activities into their

classroom. We encourage instructors to modify and tweak the activities to make them more appropriate and applicable for their students.

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## **Diversity, Inclusion, and Cultural Awareness**

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### **Abstract**

This chapter informs faculty on the purpose and use of diversity initiatives on UNC Charlotte's campus. As North Carolina's urban research university, UNCC is accessible and affordable and attracts students from all social backgrounds. We promote a learning environment that contributes to the understanding of inclusion and equity in society. UNCC is committed to diversity and is purposeful in the recruitment, retention, and support of minority faculty, students, and staff. Faculty are strongly encouraged to acknowledge the cultural, social, and economic diversity and disparities present in our multicultural classrooms. We address the unique challenges and issues that minority students face and provide faculty with pedagogical approaches and campus resources to address those challenges to foster student success.

## Introduction

In this chapter we inform faculty on the purpose and use of diversity initiatives on the UNCC campus. UNCC is accessible and affordable and attracts a range of students including transfer, first-generation, international, low-income students, returning adult learners, and recent high school graduates. UNCC is committed to diversity and is purposeful in the recruitment, retention, and support of minority faculty, students, and staff. The goal of this chapter is to support [UNCC Diversity](#) by providing practical tools and resources for instructors who aim to promote inclusion and cultural awareness in their classrooms.

UNC Charlotte is among the most [diverse campuses](#) in the UNC system with over 27,000 students enrolled in 2014. In 2012-2013, 30.7% of UNCC students were from racial or ethnic minority groups representing 45 states and 103 countries. (Take a look at the [University Profile](#) for updated demographical information.) In 2004, the University adopted a goal specifically related to diversity, “to enhance opportunities for learning in a culturally rich environment” and soon after the [UNCC Diversity Plan for Campus Diversity, Access, and Inclusion](#) was implemented. To support diversity initiatives, instructors can play an active role in helping students learn to value diversity and enhance their cultural awareness.

While recruitment efforts have enhanced diversity at many college campuses, recent institutional and media reports (a sample of reports are provided at the end of this chapter) highlight the persistent gaps in feelings of inclusion and college completion rates among underrepresented groups in terms of class, race and other social characteristics. Instructors can actively foster a civil classroom environment that promotes feelings of inclusion and cultural

awareness to encourage success for all students across myriad dimensions of social differences.

It is a core value at UNCC to manage and value cultural diversity in the classroom. Faculty are strongly encouraged to acknowledge the cultural, social, and economic diversity and disparities present in our multicultural classrooms with the goal to increase understanding and appreciation of the needs, concerns, and strengths of all students. The [Office of Undergraduate Admissions](#) features some of the programs and services offered at UNCC to foster a “fundamental understanding of diversity, unique learning styles, cultural difference and human relationships”.

### **Strategies to Implement Diversity**

Faculty are encouraged to use teaching strategies and make curriculum modifications that will better incorporate diversity initiatives. Faculty should reflect upon their current curriculum and be continually challenged to improve their diversity efforts. UNCC will maintain an environment that is inviting to all students by increasing understanding of the needs, concerns, and strengths of students from different backgrounds, abilities, and circumstances.

Here are some general objectives faculty can incorporate to enhance student learning in the classroom:

- Develop a strong sense of community. This can help foster an academic identity and create a space within academia for some of these students who often feel as if they don’t fit in. A pedagogy that includes a team-based approach and active learning is a great way to do this.

- Create opportunities to educate students about cultural diversity
- Call attention to the special needs, concerns, strengths, and accomplishments of marginalized individuals and groups
- Promote inclusiveness by encouraging university students, staff, and faculty to interact and have dialogue with each other
- Address social inequalities that persist in spite of diversity initiatives
- Arm students with strategies to decrease prejudicial thinking and combat discrimination
- Refer to the [UNCC Plan for Campus Diversity, Access, and Inclusion](#) regularly when creating syllabus and curricula

### **Creating Sensitive Practices and Becoming an Ally**

In this section, we address ways faculty can create sensitive practices in the classroom or become allies for students from culturally diverse backgrounds. We begin with a definition and discuss the relevance of certain student groupings here at UNCC. We then follow up with strategies you can use in the classroom. Finally, we provide reference links, both internal and external to UNCC, for more information. Please note the order or comparative length of each section below does not represent any type of ranking, status, or priority. Each student grouping has unique considerations that we have done our best to address in a reader-friendly and succinct manner. We also acknowledge that all student groupings may not be represented in this list.

**Adult Students**

Adult students are students over the age of 24 who are returning to school after the traditional age of 18-24. These students typically have other responsibilities such as family, career, and/or military service. Adult students return to school for a variety of reasons such as pursuing certification, an advanced degree, or lifelong learning. In 2014, UNCC enrolled about 8,107 adult students. UNC Charlotte recognizes and appreciates the diverse experiences adult students bring to the campus and to the classroom. We suggest these strategies for helping Adult Students succeed:

- Recommend adult students to [The Office of Adult Students and Evening Services](#) (OASES). OASES offers a multitude of services to assist with their transition and success at UNCC is committed to supporting and enhancing the educational experiences of the adult student. OASES provides adult students with resources such as an Adult Mentoring Program for Students (AMPS) which pairs experienced adult student volunteers with new adult students to provide a support system.
- Do not make assumptions about adult students' computer literacy, knowledge base, life experiences, attitude, or outside obligations.
- Do not ask adult students to speak on behalf of older or returning students. Remember that their individual experience is unique and it is unfair to ask them to represent a whole generation of people on a particular topic.

**Additional Resources:**

[OASES Webpage](#)

[OASES Facebook page](#)



[UNCC Counseling Center for Adult Students](#)

[49er Finish YouTube Promotional Video](#)

[Research on Adult Learners: Supporting the Needs of a Student Population that is No](#)

[Longer Nontraditional](#), Association of American Colleges and Universities

[8 Important Characteristics of Adult Learners](#), eLearning Industry

### **Commuters, Evening and Online Students**

In Fall of 2014 about 22,000 UNCC students lived off-campus, and thus, commuted via car, bus, train, or foot to campus. We suggest these strategies for helping these students succeed:

- Recommend commuter, evening and online students to [The Office of Adult Students and Evening Services \(OASES\)](#). OASES assists in recruiting and retaining a diverse student population. They advise students and offer services for prospective and enrolled adult, evening and weekend students. OASES works closely with external organizations to promote the mission of OASES and develop scholarships for students who need evening services.
- Offer office hours during the evening or weekend hours. These office hours can be by appointment, via phone, or virtual.
- Allow students to turn in assignments electronically, rather than in class.

#### **Additional Resources:**

[OASES Webpage](#)

[OASES Facebook page](#)

**Disabled Students**

A disability is any physical, mental, or cognitive impairment that limit students' activities. This includes, but is not limited to medical, physical, cognitive, psychological, visual, hearing, traumatic brain injury and attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder. We suggest these strategies for helping students with disabilities succeed:

- Refer student to [The Office of Disability Services](#) (DS). The DS is responsible for ensuring access to academic programs and campus facilities, as well as, meeting the required learning accommodations for students with disabilities.
- Notify all students of their rights and responsibilities concerning disability services in the [syllabus](#).
- Get all videos Closed Captioned before the semester starts.
- Return Letters of Accommodation to DS within 48 hours of receipt by student.
- Be proactive in helping students locate low distraction locations on campus. For example, you can reserve a space in your department for one or two students to take an exam.
- Prepare any accommodations in advance.
- Do not single out students when making accommodations (such as seating).
- Do not get annoyed or frustrated when making accommodations. Remember you are not accommodating the student to have an advantage over other students; you are enabling the student to have the same opportunity as their peers to learn.

**Additional Resources:**

[UNCC Disability Services](#)

[Faculty Responsibilities](#)

[UNCC BEST](#)

[UNCC Counseling Center for Students with Disabilities](#)

### **First Generation Students**

First generation students are diverse with regard to race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status. What they all have in common are parents that did not attend or complete a four year college program. Because of this they often lack the type of socialization that other students are able to bring into the classroom with regard to higher education at an institutional level. Kathleen Ross, the founding president of Heritage University, a university with a 75% first generation enrollment rate, points out that “students learn many of the practices and skills that lead to academic success subliminally, through socialization, rather than being directly told or taught.”

For first generation students, this socialization is absent from the home, and as a result, some of the necessary skills and support for academic success are underdeveloped. Research has shown that continuing generation students are better able to negotiate college difficulties, having parents that can guide them through the college experience by sharing information and advice about college norms and expectations, some of which are implicit.

The notion of an academic identity is also often underdeveloped, especially for students who may not have had familial encouragement or support for college entry. This may be especially true for students whose parents were not able to complete a secondary educational program. Others may be the children of immigrants that may also lack a primary education. In

some cases families may have actively discouraged or even opposed the choice for college entry.

As a result, many first generation students are often overwhelmed and have more difficulty navigating the academic landscape. Many are unable to see the big picture and focus on certain details of academic success, most notably individual grades. A barely passing or failed grade can send this student into a spiral of despair which can threaten academic success. Many come to college with a pre-conceived notion that they ultimately do not belong or while in college develop a sense of not quite fitting in. This can be exacerbated by feelings of guilt and shame over transitioning from an established and expected familial role to that of a college student. Instances of poor academic performance can reinforce these ideas and contribute to a lack of confidence for class participation and for approaching an instructor.

Despite the diversity of first generation students, a significant number come from families that earn low wages, live in under-served communities, and belong to minority groups, most notably African-American and Hispanic. The lack of financial stability is another stumbling block for academic success as the majority of these students have either part-time or full-time jobs. Many may also have a heavier load of familial responsibilities. An estimated 30 percent of college students are low-income first generation students. Alarming, 89% will not earn their BA within 6 years after high school and their dropout rate is four times higher than their non-first generation peers.

Despite all of these challenges, many first generation students bring with them a strong desire for a degree and commit themselves to academic excellence. What they need in addition to desire and commitment are classroom experiences which help initiate them into the culture

of higher education and knowledge of resources which can assist them with navigating an unfamiliar landscape. We suggest these strategies for helping first generation students succeed:

- Refer student to the [University Center for Academic Excellence](#) (UCAE). The UCAE provides tutoring and other academic student support services.
- Share campus resources with the class and include the [BEST \(Building Educational Strengths and Talents\) program](#) which is available through the University Center for Academic Excellence. BEST helps meet the needs of first generation students as well as students with documented disabilities and those receiving financial aid coupled with work study.
- During the first days of class ask students to reflect on what a college education and identity mean to them. Ask them to share their stories and highlight social differences as a way of helping them understand how their own backgrounds often inform their perception of the college experience. First generation students may speak up but if they don't, instructors can include their voices by showing a video of first generation students sharing their stories.
- Listen to first generation stories from students and other college instructors to gain more perspective.
- Explicitly let students know that you are available for them during your office hours. Many first generation students are unaware that instructor's office hours are for student engagement.

**Additional Resources:**

[UNCC BEST](#)

[Faculty Tips for First-Gen Students](#) Inside Higher Education

[Strategy Videos for Student Success](#) Heritage University

[I'm First Guide to College](#) Center for Student Opportunity

[First Generation College Students Benefit from Discussion Class Differences](#) Stanford News

[First generation student stories](#) Center for Student Opportunity

[Active Role in Class helps Black and First Generation Students, Study Says](#) New York Times, September 2014

[First Generation College Students: First Year Challenges](#) Darling and Smith

## Gender

The gender ratio at UNCC is 51% men to 49% women. Social expectations associated with gender in American society lead to gross disparities in opportunities, potential, and well-being. Gender stereotypes reproduce gender bias and discrimination puts women at a disadvantage and men at an unearned advantage. Cultural theorists and critics have contributed to this political dimension of gender debates by studying the role of cultural practices and forms in considering – or disrupting – gender hierarchies and norms. Consistent with the mission and objective(s) of *Top 40 Academy*, instead of discussing women as a separate group for example, it is rather important to focus on the divergent experiences of men and women within each minority group, including gender to inform curriculum and pedagogy. We suggest these strategies for addressing gender in the classroom:

- Include all students in class discussion. Do not let a few students, especially all male students, dominate the conversation.

- Promote respect and use inclusive language. Do not refer to female students as “girls” or refer to the entire classroom as “guys”.
- Recognize and try to combat any gender bias you have when it comes to learning and education, such as male students understand chemistry better or female students are good at organization.
- Use a [gender lens](#) when deciding on curriculum, textbooks, teaching and learning, and assessments.
  - Consider how gender stereotypes are reinforced or undermined in course materials.
  - Consider how course materials reflect or distort the place men and women have in society.
- Advocate for gender equality. Be vocal and purposeful about how you are incorporating gender-sensitive practices in the classroom.

**Additional Resources:**

[UNCC Multicultural Resource Center for Sex and Gender](#)

[Teaching Strategies for a Gender Equitable Classroom](#), Sellnow, 1993

[Gender Equality in the Classroom \(Things to Think About\)](#), Rayaprol 2010

[Teacher Training Modules that Address Gender Issues and Promote Gender Equality](#)

UNESCO Ha Noi Office and the UNESCO International Bureau of Education, 2011

**Immigrant and International Students**

Immigrant students are those that have permanently relocated to the United States from another country, while 2nd generation immigrants are those whose parents moved to the

United States from another country. International students are non-immigrant students who are visiting our campus from another country. UNC Charlotte welcomes a [growing number](#) of non-immigrant international students to campus each year. In Fall 2014, for example, there were nearly 1500 students from 78 different countries enrolled at UNCC.

A recent report from the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 2012) revealed that about 23% of undergraduate students in the United States were either immigrants (10%) or 2nd generation immigrants (13%) during the 2007-08 academic year. While this group of students generally places a strong emphasis on education and hard work (Pew, 2013), they often face obstacles to college success. For example, 1st and 2nd generation immigrants are more likely than other students to be low income, more likely to be 1st generation college students, and are less likely to have grown up in a home where English is the primary language spoken (NCES, 2012). Such obstacles are associated with higher rates of remedial course taking and lower rates of full-time enrollment among 1st and 2nd generation immigrants in college. Of course, these challenges are further compounded for college-age students in the US that lack legal status (see Gonzales, 2009 for a report on undocumented students).

While students have many resources available to them through the [International Student / Scholar Office](#) (ISSO), faculty can help international students succeed. As ISSO puts it, faculty may be “caught off-guard by the various learning styles and sets of expectations” international students bring to the classroom and they may not be aware of the pressure these students feel. Each fall, ISSO hosts an “[Immigration 101](#)” workshop for faculty and staff and they have a



presentation from the workshop available online. We suggest these strategies for helping immigrant and international students succeed:

- Refer students to the [ISSO](#) office.
- Attend the Immigration 101 workshop and/or download its [resource materials](#).
- Allow students to record lectures
- Speak clearly, at a moderate pace and emphasize key points
- Use visuals as much as you can
- Use Closed Captioning with all videos
- Write down critical vocabulary, provide notes, or an outline of your lecture

**Additional Resources:**

[UNCC International Student and Scholar Office \(ISSO\)](#)

[UNCC Counseling Center for International Students](#)

[UNC Chapel Hill Writing Center for tips on teaching immigrant/ESL students](#)

[New Americans in Postsecondary Education: A Profile of Immigrant and Second-](#)

[Generation American Undergraduates](#) National Center for Educational Statistics, 2012

[Second-Generation Americans: A Portrait of the Adult Children of Immigrants](#). Pew

Research. 2013

[Young Lives on Hold: The College Dreams of Undocumented Students](#). Roberto

Gonzales, 2009

**Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) Students**

Under the prevailing Western system of compulsory heterosexuality, a distinction is drawn between legitimate and illegitimate (lesbian, gay, bisexual) sexual practices, and

heterosexuality is established as the social norm and, thus, the only socially legitimized expression of sexual orientation is to be heterosexual. Those who do not fit the dichotomous (male/female) classification of gender, and those who do not identify as heterosexual [face challenges](#).

UNCC promotes our [Safe Zone Program](#). The goal of the Safe Zone Program is to create, develop, and train faculty and staff members who can serve as “allies.” As noted in its “Statement of Purpose,” an “Ally” is “an informed campus partner who has committed time and energy through organized training to learn more about individuals that may identify as Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning or may be unsure of their sexual orientation or gender identity. This goal will be accomplished through Safe Zone Ally Development Trainings offered by the Assistant Director for Sexual/Gender Diversity. We suggest these strategies for helping LGBTQ students:

- Refer LGBTQ students to the [Safe Zone Program](#) if they approach you for assistance or you perceive they may be facing challenges.
- Become a [Faculty Ally](#)
- Do not ask LGBTQ students to speak on behalf of their group. Remember that their individual experience is unique and it is unfair to ask them to represent an entire group of people on a particular topic.

**Additional Resources:**

[UNCC Safe Zone](#)

[Counseling Center for LGBTQ students](#)

[Spectrum Student Organization \(formerly PRIDE\)](#)

[LGBT Community Center of Charlotte](#)

[Visit Gay Charlotte](#)

[Carolina Transgender Society](#)

[Charlotte Gender Alliance](#)

[Time Out Youth](#)

[GLBT National Help Center](#)

### **Military/Veteran Students**

With nearly 3 million veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan alone, we can expect many students to enter our classes with prior military experience. [In Spring 2013, over 3% of enrolled UNC Charlotte students were using Veterans Affairs \(VA\) benefits to attend school.](#) While veterans have often developed valuable skills during their military service that can enhance academic success, they may face post-deployment challenges that negatively affect academic performance, ranging from financial and family matters to medical and mental health issues. We suggest these strategies for helping military-affiliated students:

- Encourage eligible students to use the resources of the [Veteran Student Services Office](#) at UNCC, which supports the successful transition and retention of veteran students on campus.
- Some tips for working with students who are combat veterans and for providing classroom support can be found in [“From Combat to Classroom”](#) (navpa.org).

### **Additional Resources:**

[UNCC Veteran Student Services Office](#)

[UNCC Counseling Center for Military –Affiliated students](#)

[UNCC Serves](#)

[UNCC Serves 2014 Resource Guide](#)

[From Combat to Classroom, NAVPA](#)

## **Racial and Ethnic Minorities**

The term race refers to groups of people who have differences and similarities in biological traits deemed by society to be socially significant, meaning that people treat other people differently because of them. Ethnicity refers to shared cultural practices, perspectives, and distinctions that set apart one group of people from another. That is, ethnicity is shared cultural heritage. The most common characteristics distinguishing various ethnic groups are ancestry, a sense of history, language, religion, and forms of dress. Ethnic differences are not inherited; they are learned, acquired.

In the spirit of the mission and objective(s) of *40 Top Academy*, it is important to stress that our campuses today consist of different ethnic groups mirroring the communities they serve. Ideally, campuses strive for pluralism, where students, faculty, and staff of all ethnicities and races remain distinct but aspire to social equality. As an example, UNC Charlotte campus is exceptionally diverse in the University of North Carolina System, with people representing groups from all over the globe, but still lacking in true pluralism. The same can be said of ethnic diversity of the other campuses with their various ethnic groups, some having tens and hundreds of members.

Evolving from academic abstract to practical pedagogy, in order to understand the teaching and learning impact of race and ethnicity, the phenomenon needs to be situated economically, ideologically, historically and geographically. It takes different forms at different historical

conjunctures and is justified in different ways according to prevailing circumstances. It defines and informs curriculum. Some strategies for helping historically underrepresented students include:

- Include all students in class discussion. Do not let a few students, especially all white students, dominate the conversation; but, do not ask racial and ethnic minority students to speak on behalf of their group. Remember that their individual experience is unique and it is unfair to ask them to represent an entire group of people on a particular topic.
- Recognize and try to combat any racial bias you have when it comes to learning and education. Do not make assumptions as to what students' value based on their race.
- Use a racial lens in deciding on curriculum, textbooks, teaching and learning, and assessments.
  - Analyze how the class materials discuss race, heritage, and ethnicity. Or, consider what images of "others" are presented in the materials. How are these "others" portrayed?
  - Do not use unfair stereotypes in classroom materials and examples
  - Analyze the course material for how it deals with cultural conflicts, particularly between majority and minority groups.
- Advocate for racial/ethnic equality. Be vocal and purposeful about how you are incorporating racial/ethnic sensitive practices in the classroom.

**Additional Resources:**

[UNCC Counseling Center for Students of Color](#)

[UNCC Multicultural Center for History and Heritage](#)

[Race Equality Toolkit](#), Universities Scotland

### **Religious Background**

Instructors need to be aware of the religious diversity of their students. Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Islam, and Hinduism are the largest groups represented on the UNCC campus. This is especially important for instructors in the humanities and social sciences who include ethnographies, histories, material culture, etc. in their curricula. Please note the following approaches to handling issues related to religion:

- Instructors may assume that students bring prior knowledge of Christian histories and stories to the classroom and therefore may not provide the necessary background information for non-Christian students to fully understand material.
- Instructors may also be unaware of communicating Euro-centric perspectives and understandings of course material. As western worldviews are partly derived from Christian worldviews, instructors may inadvertently exclude other religious viewpoints if relevant to the class material.
- In addition, instructors may be able to assess a student's religious background and include instructional material that can create a more inclusive experience.
- Lastly, many religious students also bring traditional values to the classroom. Instructors may assume that all people make sharp distinctions between what is sacred and secular and, therefore, may inadvertently (or intentionally) belittle traditional beliefs and values. Instructors have no need of personally criticizing those beliefs with the exception of those that may be offensive and damaging to others in the class.

- Instructors should not allow faith perspectives to compromise historical and scientific facts. Students should be made aware of the differences between scientific, historical, and religious truths. Instead of dismissing religious beliefs as silly, instructors can respectfully tell students that those beliefs may make sense from a faith perspective but are not relevant for the task at hand in the class.
- Finally, **per UNCC policy, instructors are asked to accommodate a maximum of two student absences due to religious observances.** Information about this policy should be included in the [class syllabus](#).

**Additional Resources:**

[UNCC Religious and Spiritual Life](#)

[UNCC Multicultural Center for Religion and Spirituality](#)

**Rural and Urban Students**

Discussions about diversity on college campuses often exclude identification of the differences between rural and urban students. Indeed, the differences in many cases are subtle or maybe lumped into the category of socio-economic status. This is misleading and does not appropriately treat the differences in life experiences among urban and rural students. UNCC is an urban campus in an urban county and naturally the default lens of life experiences is an urban one. However this belies the fact that a significant number of UNCC students come from surrounding counties, many of which are designated as rural. For instance nearby Cleveland, Lincoln, Polk, and Rutherford counties are designated as rural with a considerable amount of farming as a source of livelihood. [In fact out of NC's 100 counties, only 15 are designated as](#)

[urban](#). Many other students coming from other states and countries are also coming from rural environments.

A comparison of urban and rural settings reveals these general features of rural areas: 1) smaller minority populations, 2) lower incomes, 3) fewer college graduates 4) a greater sense of community and safety 5) a slower pace of life and 6) more value placed on traditional beliefs, gender identities and other social roles. These features should be considered when thinking about how this student demographic may feel a lesser sense of inclusion at an urban institution. Strategies for fostering a sense of inclusion can include:

- When appropriate representing the rural experience through assigned readings and instructional examples
- Acknowledging the possible lack of familiarity and comfort with diversity and responding through the construction of safe bridges to new social realities
- Discouraging students from using epithets such as redneck or country yahoo, or other epithets which are often not recognized as discriminatory.

**Additional Resources:**

[UNCC Admissions: Diversity Links](#)

**Socio-economic Status**

Socio-economic status (SES) refers to a person's position in a hierarchical system. It is based on variables such as occupation, education level, wealth and access to resources. It is a combination of variables that make up a student's class position (i.e., upper, middle, working, working poor, or poor). UNCC prides itself on being an affordable and accessible to the general



public. In 2013 the university had a 63% acceptance rate, a SAT range of 980-1160, about \$32,000 in total annual costs for students, and 75% of students on financial aid.

UNCC has students from all SES backgrounds. Generally speaking, lower class students lack confidence due to real or perceived weaknesses in preparation. They tend to feel unwelcome and are acutely aware of their class status. Middle class students, least aware of their class status, are fairly prepared for learning. Upper class students are the most prepared and skilled when it comes to learning. They are confident and often display expressions of entitlement or advantage. They are aware of their class status and may attempt to hide it due to embarrassment about their advantages.

It is important to realize, that as an instructor, your students will come from all types of socio-economic backgrounds and not assume they share the same understandings, embrace the same perspectives, are similarly prepared, and are unconscious about their class position. Here are some strategies taken from [Warren's Class in the Classroom](#) to create an inclusive classroom environment:

- Be explicit about classroom norms and your expectations
- Include readings and examples from a variety of class perspectives
- Vary the kinds of assignments and activities for different learning styles
- Protect students who make unsophisticated comments
- Use student experiences in class discussion and ask about personal reactions to course materials
- Model acceptance of various class backgrounds

**Additional Resources:**

[Class in the Classroom](#), Warren, Harvard University

[Teaching a Diverse Student Body: Practical Strategies for Enhancing Our Students'](#)

[Learning](#), Teaching Resource Center

[Education and Socioeconomic Status](#) American Psychological Association

[Socio-economic Status: Teaching with Differences in Mind](#) Tunkelo, 2012

### **Transfer Students**

A transfer student is anyone who has attended a college or university prior to their enrollment at UNCC. Students who are completing college courses while in high school, are considered a freshman and not a transfer student. UNCC has a large transfer population, mostly coming from Central Piedmont Community College, but also from some of the many NC colleges and universities. In 2014, UNCC enrolled over 2,700 transfer students. University College has [Information and Initiatives for Transfer Students](#). The website includes important information for our new students starting their college education experience at UNC Charlotte. New faculty teaching General Education courses of the University College will also find very important support exploring the same text. We suggest these strategies for helping transfer student succeed:

- Offer study guides or review sessions for course materials and exams.
- Consider allowing students to turn in drafts of writing assignments for feedback before the final project/writing is due.
- Remind all students, but especially transfer students, to seek [academic advising](#) each semester.

### **Additional Resources:**

[UNCC Transfer Student Homepage](#)

[UNCC University College](#) (Information for faculty, freshman and transfer students)

[UNCC Helpful Links for Transfer students](#) (includes links advising, counseling, extracurricular resources)

**Sample of institutional and media reports addressing diversity effects on student college experience:**

[Who Gets to Graduate?](#) NY Times, May 2014

[Completing College: Assessing Graduation Rates at Four-Year Institutions](#), Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA, November 2011

[Why Does Diversity Matter at College Anyway?](#) U.S. News, August 2009

[Graduation Rate Watch](#) American Institutes for Research, April 2008

## Civic Engagement: In and Outside the Classroom

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### Abstract

This article is a comprehensive look at the many diverse ways in which faculty can facilitate civic engagement in academic settings and in students' wider communities. We discuss eight pedagogical principles of experiential learning and four levels of civic engagement, which are (a) exposure; (b) engagement; (c) service learning; and (d) internships. We offer explanations of and examples from each of these levels. Additionally, we provide on-campus resources relevant to various types of civic engagement and faculty support.

### **Introduction**

A fundamental tenet of a liberal arts education is that students should have the ability to engage with a broader community—a community that goes beyond the boundaries of their job or classroom. Since civic engagement is a critical element of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte’s mission (and thus everyone’s teaching), this chapter seeks to define the nature of citizenship and engagement, outline its importance in Top 40 curriculums, and provide specific examples of what forms active civic engagement can take.

Broadly, civic engagement involves students applying skills learned in the classroom to improve the quality of life in communities of every scale. Given that every student and faculty member is an element of a larger social fabric, we each have an obligation to participate in the maintenance and preservation of that society. Top 40 classes are one of UNC Charlotte’s first opportunities to illustrate this obligation to students. Hopefully, if University faculty are made aware of the importance and relevance of civic engagement, they will impart to students that skills in critical thinking, sensitivity to diversity and political perspectives, and discipline-specific knowledge are powerful components of social change. In essence, this chapter seeks to reinforce the societal value of a liberal arts education and help build social capital among our students and the community.

More specifically, this chapter will revisit the importance of civic engagement (community membership on local to global scales) in the classroom. This will involve (a) illustrating to students the societal significance of liberal arts training and its relevance to the broader community (in contrast to vocationally-oriented training); (b) showing students how their education can be used

to engage their communities; (c) articulating the value of your course beyond the classroom; and (d) developing specific strategies for applying students' knowledge in their communities.

### **Levels of Civic Engagement**

There are various levels of civic engagement that can lead students to think of themselves as actors within their wider communities and to become involved participants. The hope is that these various levels of civic engagement in the classroom will not only meet community needs, but also forge stronger connections of academic knowledge and student commitment to community and civic engagement in the future. For the purposes of this chapter, we divide the levels of civic engagement into four categories: (a) exposure; (b) engagement; (c) service learning; and (d) internships.

Civic engagement on these four levels typically involves experiential learning strategies that have connections outside the classroom (unlike laboratory instruction). Civic engagement activities can range broadly in complexity and scale from individual volunteerism to organizational involvement to political participation. The underlying assumption of these exercises is that students' experiences in the classroom should prepare them to participate comfortably in these various types of activities as an engaged citizen. The best way to ensure that students get the most from these various experiences is to ask them to reflect in written or oral form on how their experiences added, complicated, or confirmed concepts learned in the classroom.

#### **Exposure**

Sometimes we just need to expose our students to the wider community in which they live. This would involve minimal interaction for the students, but may force them to go outside of

their regular comfort zone. Exposure can include reading local newspapers, attending local events and exhibits, taking the local bus, or eating in a local restaurant.

**Engagement**

Engagement should help students learn more about their communities and show them ways in which they can have a meaningful impact. This could include having students write advocacy letters to a newspaper, corporations, or public officials; conducting oral histories; or organizing public forums, performances, or exhibitions.

**Service Learning**

Service learning should help students expand on concepts and information learned in class by exposing them to the complexities of real world scenarios. Service learning includes both exposure and the impact of engagement, but does so in a way that enables students to meet the needs of community organizations or institutions, rather than only completing in-class assignments. However, such learning should be linked to class readings, discussions, and/or reflection assignments. The service can vary in duration and depth. It can be participation in or organization of a single project, putting in a certain number of hours at a non-profit organization, or supporting a number of campus-wide community service projects or activities like Niner Food Pantry, on-campus Habitat Builds, the Community Garden, and Stop Hunger Now food-packaging events. There are many courses that carry the Service Learning (SL) designation, a notation on students' transcripts similar to the one for Writing Intensive (WI). It began in 2012 and signals that the course has a formal service learning component. Faculty who are aiming at this level of civic engagement are encouraged to complete the paperwork that gives their course this

designation. It is a short form that goes through the university course and curriculum committee approval process, and can be found at [Course and Curriculum Procedures and Forms](#).

### **Internships**

Internships usually involve a certain amount of hours per semester, but not classroom time. The organization or business holding the internship needs to be vetted by a representative of the department. Students must have a mentor at the organization with sufficient experience and status and an adviser in their department who will individually check proposals, correspond with the mentor, and evaluate the final product (this could be a paper, journal, or project). UNC Charlotte also offers the [49ership through the Career Center](#), which is similar to internships but more closely aligned with civic engagement. 49erships occur in non-profit organizations and also carry a transcript notation. It is often possible to link these opportunities to discipline-specific courses.

### **Exercises for the Levels of Civic Engagement**

While you may use the resources listed in this chapter, we thought that specific exercises used by instructors of various disciplines at UNC Charlotte and other institutions would be helpful to new and experienced faculty. Some of these exercises can be used for large classrooms, and others may work better with small ones. Where possible, we have added specific assignments.

Additionally, UNC Charlotte is a member of [Campus Compact](#), a national coalition that “promotes public and community service that develops students’ citizenship skills, helps campuses forge effective community partnerships, and provides resources and training for faculty seeking to integrate civic and community-based learning into the curriculum.” Their website has a variety of resource types and includes sample syllabi (organized by field) that



contain civic engagement exercises. They also have excellent resources for reflective writing, including [assessment rubrics](#).

### **Exposure**

**Reading the newspaper.** For an LBST course, the instructor had students read the *Christian Science Monitor* and summarize a national and an international article weekly.

**Cultural field trips.** For an introductory course, the instructor asked students to go to various museums or historic sites. Students took pictures of themselves with ticket stubs at the site and then were asked to reflect on their experiences in a class blog.

**Religious encounters.** For a History of Religion class, students were asked to attend a worship service of a religious community to which they did not belong. This sometimes involved contacting the place of worship beforehand to determine if there were any special rules that they needed to observe and to make sure they would be welcomed. Students were then asked to write a reflection piece that tied the experience to what they had learned about the various ways in which religion is practiced.

**Reading the landscape.** For an LBST class, students learned to observe and interpret the landscape of an area. This included examining both the natural and architectural elements of the environment and applying theories about reading the landscape in a paper on their given place. See [Place Paper](#) for more details.

**The cinema experience.** For the LBST class Arts and Society, students were asked to attend a screening presented by the Charlotte Film Society and then meaningfully reflect on the cultural and societal impact of the film. Students attended screenings in a non-traditional

screening space and were exposed to arthouse and foreign cinema from various countries and various genres.

## **Engagement**

**Writing an advocacy letter.** After reading Michael Pollan's *In Defense of Food*, an LBST instructor asked students to analyze the October K-8 school menu at Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS). They were given an explanation of the new food requirements from the CMS nutrition website, a nutrient analysis and allergens chart, and the United States Department of Agriculture's recommendations for salt and calories by age. Students were taught how to write an advocacy letter and then wrote a letter to the head of the Child Nutrition Services at CMS. A large class had individual letters, whereas a small class composed a letter together, delegating by task and subject.

**Writing an advocacy letter.** Students in a Music Education class were instructed to write a hypothetical two- to four-page letter to the superintendent of CMS and had to defend the statement "Music is basic and should be required of all children, K-12." They needed to incorporate research about how the developmental, emotional, social, aesthetic, and social functions of music contribute to the academic and social success of a child.

**Creating a community archive, database, or website.** The Africana Studies and History Departments did a number of interconnected projects on the former Brooklyn and current Biddleville communities in Charlotte. These included an archive of oral history interviews conducted and reviewed by students. Each student had to conduct three interviews, create a bio, time log, and digital copy for each interview, and transcribe one copy. These were then posted on the [Brooklyn Oral History website](#). Likewise, a Digital History class created a [website](#) that included

a more general history of Brooklyn, but had an archive of digitized documents and educational resources.

**Creation of a play production examining ideas/principles of social justice.** The Department of Theatre and Crossroads Charlotte at UNC Charlotte created a semester-long theatre collaboration course with the stated objective of (a) demonstrating an understanding of the demographic changes within the community and on campus; (b) defining and applying concepts of social capital and social justice including access, inclusion, equity, and trust; and (c) articulating and demonstrating the connection between theatre, community-building, and social change. Students were required to go out into the community and interview subjects relevant to the chosen issue and then create, write, design, and present an original work on that topic. Interview subjects and other members from the campus and local community were then invited to view the performance and have a talkback discussion about their thoughts on both the production and the larger community issue presented.

[Syllabus](#)

[Amendments Aside: This play's all about humanity](#)

[Jumping Mountains Longer](#)

**Conducting surveys.** A number of classes asked students to conduct surveys of various communities to determine societal attitudes, determine when empirical information was needed to create better policies, and assess and meet community needs. In a Criminal Justice class, students were asked to conduct surveys on youth perceptions of connections between violence and drugs. While surveys can be valuable pedagogic devices, UNC Charlotte Institutional Review Board clearance is sometimes necessary.

**Educational outreach.** Students had to go to their own or another local high school and talk to students about the importance of a college education. The STARS Alliance on campus has been doing this for computer science students to promote diversity in computing and have a [website](#) that may be useful.

### **Service Learning**

**Community gardens.** For a small LBST course that focused on food, the instructor required that students spend five hours volunteering in a garden or on a farm. At least three of these hours had to be spent off campus (that year, UNC Charlotte began its own community garden). Students were encouraged to work at the Urban Ministries Garden, and the instructor worked with the head gardener to ensure available hours for the students. Other students worked at Community Supported Agriculture sites and other community gardens, or helped as part of a [gleaning team](#) on local farms. Students were asked to take a picture of themselves working at their site and to reflect in a short essay on their experience and how it confirmed or expanded what they had learned in class.

**Community service.** Many courses in different disciplines asked students to do various amounts of community service hours, from ten or more hours during the whole semester to three hours per week. In a Literature course, students volunteered for three hours per week in a community service agency and kept a journal that described their service experiences and how they enriched their readings. Students were encouraged to connect intellectual and moral issues posed by the readings to service work.

**Music education.** Music Education students at UNC Charlotte were required to complete ten hours of community service supporting a local music program. This could be at a school, a

religious community, or a senior citizen center. Support included either playing or singing with a band/orchestra/choir or providing secretarial and administrative duties for a program. A two- to four-page reflection paper was required. [[Music Education](#)]

**Art-service programs.** These typically involved visual or performing arts participation activities for youth in the community. Advanced art students in all disciplines took the tools and training they gained as part of their education and went into the community to create new community-based works with local and under-funded community arts projects and organizations. This allowed students to continue practicing and teaching their craft, but also allowed them to learn the real world problems and challenges of community artists.

**Bridging the digital divide projects.** These typically involved technology training for low-income residents who may not have experience with digital tools. Some of these activities included assistance with website construction for neighborhood associations or local non-profits. Specific examples of programs which enhance community access to the Internet include repurposing/recycling aging equipment for community access or providing community wireless access.

**Community youth mentoring programs.** Instructors encouraged involvement with community youth via existing programs such as Big Brothers Big Sisters of America. Other forms of youth engagement included tutoring, education, or education components.

**Public service announcement projects.** These projects required development of materials to raise community awareness of specific issues, which is particularly appropriate for media-oriented instruction. Announcements were generally distributed via existing media, although a unique web presence could be developed for distribution purposes.

**Voter registration drives and voter education.** Political Science courses have operationalized theoretical material from lectures and text into community voter registration and education programs. Most commonly, these outreach and education efforts involved a public interface via neighborhood association and community events such as fairs or festivals.

**Fundraising projects.** These projects were typically directed at international aid projects where direct service provision is impractical, such as Stop Hunger Now (a campus-wide initiative). Besides this food-packaging event, money for each meal packaged must be raised, which can be linked to class activities. Sean Langley and the [Office of Volunteer Outreach](#) coordinates Stop Hunger Now.

**Service to the disabled.** Activities have ranged from reading for the blind and supporting the aged (Meals on Wheels) to projects designed to improve community accessibility.

**Community building projects.** Community Planning students have frequently provided labor and expertise to community organizations, planned office advocacy, and assisted in the development of a neighborhood organization. These efforts included data collection, plan preparation, and assistance with community grant submissions for environmental remediation.

[[Engagement Assignment Example 1](#), [Engagement Assignment Example 2](#), [Engagement Assignment Example 3](#), [Engagement Assignment Example 4 -- Semester length](#), ....]

**Editing community publications.** The English Department offers experiential learning in a number of different ways. In one class, students helped publish a regular newsletter with the Uptown Men's Shelter of Charlotte while another class, Editing With Technical Documents, edited this e-book you are reading.

## Internships

**Archival and museum internships.** The History Department has internships for undergraduate and graduate students. Archival and museum internships are mainly completed by graduates in our Public History program and are overseen by the Director of Public History. All sites are vetted and students and the institution create a proposal or contract of intention, which is then signed by the internship adviser, the student, and the mentor at the institution before the internship commences. Students are required to keep a journal and write a paper at the end of the semester. The adviser contacts the mentor at least once in the semester and helps troubleshoot any issues that arise.

**Community-based internships.** The Geography Department has internships for undergraduate and graduate students, which focus on community planning and community development. Tasks include gathering public input on community plans, facilitating the development of community organizations, and the organization and direction of community improvement projects such as playground upgrades, lighting improvements, and organization of community watch programs.

**Skills-based internships in non-profit organizations.** Non-profit organizations are frequently in need of students' applied skills. Examples include preparing documents, archiving, bookkeeping, implementing expertise in selecting locations for expansion, and service provision.

## Principles of Pedagogical Practice

The National Society for Experiential Education offers eight principles of good pedagogic practice in experiential education activities. These principles should be used when developing classroom and extracurricular activities. The principles can also be used to assess the

effectiveness of civic engagement activities and to ensure that they meet the pedagogic and civic goals of the course and program. The principles are explained below.

**Intention**

A clear outline of why an experiential approach is the best way for students to master the learning objective is needed.

**Preparedness and Planning**

To facilitate the connection of experiential efforts to the classroom, background knowledge and experience should be provided before beginning experiential learning activities.

**Authenticity**

The experience must be contextualized so the experiential efforts will benefit the broader community.

**Reflection**

To achieve the desired learning outcomes of the course, it is necessary to encourage students to connect their civic engagement experience to the broad theoretical context of the classroom.

**Orientation and Training**

It is vital that students, instructors, and community participants all share the same background information for the experiential learning project.

**Monitoring and Continuous Improvement**

Observations of how the experiential learning activity meets the learning objectives of the course (and the revisions of the activity) are vital to maintaining the effectiveness of the activity as a learning exercise.



**Assessment and Evaluation**

Objective outcomes should be identified and monitored.

**Acknowledgement**

The documentation and sharing of the project's achievements, along with recognition of community partners, is necessary to create rewarding and sustainable experiential learning opportunities.

**On-Campus Resources to Facilitate Civic Engagement in the Classroom**

Facilitating student engagement with the broader community is a critical element of the University's mission to prepare students for their futures. However, the development and delivery of these activities can require resources that are not commonly available in the University. The effective provision for civic engagement activities may require the following resources:

- Funds for field trip expenses (e.g. transportation and admissions fees);
- Speaker fees;
- Maintenance of listings of independent volunteer opportunities, community-based internships, and other experiential learning opportunities;
- Curriculum development funds specifically targeted for service learning projects;
- Funding for graduate assistants to supervise large-scale community outreach projects.

Assistance with engagement activities can be obtained from the following offices:

- The [Office of Volunteer Outreach](#) (directed by Sean Langley, Assistant Director for Off-Campus and Volunteer Outreach);

- [Campus Compact](#), UNC Charlotte Chapter (meets monthly and is coordinated by Tamara Johnson of Academic Affairs);
- [The Office of Education Abroad](#), the Office of Volunteer Outreach, and [Campus Habitat](#) (for alternative or service-oriented spring breaks);
- The [Center for Teaching and Learning](#) (Faculty Fellow Kim Buch offers Service Learning pedagogical workshops regularly throughout the year);
- The Center for Teaching and Learning and Campus Compact (they co-sponsor an annual Service Learning Showcase for UNC Charlotte faculty and students to share their projects via poster presentations);
- The [University Career Center](#) (the 49ership program and the University Professional Internship Program (UPIP) can be used to hire a student in support of a service initiative);
- The [Civic Minor](#) (an interdisciplinary minor that focuses on civic engagement, coordinated by Susan Harden).

Given that civic engagement activities are fundamental to the mission of UNC Charlotte, it is important to request appropriate resources for these activities from the administration when resources for new projects are not readily available from existing programs.

The importance of engagement or community membership (from local to global) can be reinforced by:

- Showing students the importance of a liberal arts education (as opposed to a vocational education) in a democratic society;

- Using the liberal arts education to engage students' communities (this can include writing letters to editors, writing to corporations, service learning, volunteer work, or starting a petition on [change.org](https://www.change.org));
- Articulating the value of courses in the larger world and figuring out how to tie this value into course objectives;
- Developing or suggesting responses to the implications of what they are learning in the classroom.

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[NB](#)

## Preparing Students for Life Success and Life Value Beyond School

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### Abstract

Success is defined differently through every stage of life. The definition of success in college includes understanding course material, achieving a high GPA, attaining honors, and progressing towards graduation. However, the definition of success after college includes but is not limited to accomplishing one's goals, attaining financial security/job satisfaction, and being content with one's best attempt. This chapter focuses on exemplary habits that you can model and instill in your students that will carry them to graduation and beyond.

## **Introduction**

The word “success” means different things to different people and in different stages of life. The definition of success in college includes understanding course material, achieving a high GPA, attaining honors, and progressing towards graduation. However, the definition of success after college can include accomplishing personal and career goals, attaining financial security and job satisfaction, and finding pride in the work you produce. This chapter focuses on exemplary habits that you can model and instill in your students that will carry them to graduation and beyond.

### **Definition for Success**

Merriam-Webster defines success as “the fact of getting or achieving wealth, respect, or fame” (n.d.). From the student’s perspective, success most likely translates to achieving one’s goals both during the academic career and post-graduation. Goals during the academic career are quite varied among students, but the most common is graduating. Other goals may be matriculating through an honors program or getting involved in extracurricular activities such as student government or student organizations. Post-graduation goals may include enrolling in a graduate or professional program, acquiring a good job, or obtaining a stable financial status. It is important that students have these types of goals as they progress through their academic career. Having a clear career objective and a set plan of study motivates students towards success. However, for some students, these goals can weigh heavily on them and impede their ability to be successful. Your role as their teacher can be looked at as two-fold:

- help students develop obtainable, clearly defined goals
- communicate the attributes/habits needed to accomplish set goals

**Help Students Develop Obtainable Goals**

The first goal of all students entering college is to graduate. Faculty can make students aware of services available on campus that can aid them in creating an academic plan of study and deciding a career path (see list of resources at the end of this chapter). For assistance on a plan of study, faculty can point students to undergraduate coordinators, department advisors, program directors, and the campus Career Center. Students can be made aware of the different services the Career Center can offer to help develop a career path; aptitude testing, resume critiques, interview tips, and career-fair dates are some of the services that the Career Center can provide. Faculty can also encourage students to develop smaller goals within a classroom setting that will help them be successful throughout the course.

**Communicate Necessary Habits to Accomplish Goals**

The best way faculty can communicate the attributes and habits necessary for achieving success in and out of the classroom is to model the attributes that are proven to lead to success. Faculty can purposefully incorporate specific attributes into their pedagogy and in their everyday interactions with students. Students can learn which habits lead to success by watching the actions of the instructor. As the old adage says, “Actions speak louder than words”.

**Habits for Success**

For many students to attain success during and after college, they need to develop and apply effective habits. Steven Covey, author of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, introduces habits that help people develop and become more effective (1999). The first four habits can be directly applied to students in their endeavor to succeed:

- Be proactive...Take responsibility for your actions.
- Begin with the end in mind... Set goals and plan ahead.
- Put first things first... Don't procrastinate. Start with the most important task.
- Think "win-win"... Base every interaction on mutual respect.

Students need to learn how to incorporate these four habits into their everyday lives, as students and as members of society (Covey, 1999).

### **Be Proactive**

Students who are proactive don't make excuses. They accept the consequences of their actions. Penalties for late work or class tardiness are expected. They know where to go for help when it is needed. They go to office hours, talk to professors before or after class, and send emails with a short question.

### **Begin with the End in Mind**

Students should have well-defined goals during college as well as after college. They should set semester goals as well as daily goals that lead to the accomplishment of their overall goal.

### **Put First Things First**

Students should prioritize obligations. They should do the most important things first. Putting off tasks because they are difficult is never a good idea. Successful students should realize that college is their job and doing their best in classes should be of highest importance.

### **Think "Win-Win"**

Students who think "win-win" know how to work with others to benefit everybody. They know that actively participating in a study group helps with learning difficult subject



matter and internalizing the content by helping others learn. They know to be respectful when dealing with professors and classmates.

### **Instilling Successful Habits in Students**

Instructors are frequently among the most influential people in their students' lives. As their teacher, you can begin modeling and presenting the habits that will be necessary for your student's success in college and in their career. We have gathered the following suggestions for your consideration: be a role model for the students, clearly communicate the qualities necessary to succeed, provide opportunities for help and networking, and hold regular office hours.

#### **Be their Role Model**

Instructors should be good role models because students are learning through their lesson plans as well as their speech and actions. Students learn through their teachers' commitment to excellence. In addition to what is written in the syllabus, students learn habits that lead to success as they see these habits modeled by their instructor. It should be clear to students that instructors take pride in the work they do and they do their best. As a good role model, teachers should always:

- Arrive early to class. Teachers should plan to be 5-10 minutes early, so that in case of a delay or a mishap they will still be on time. This is a good habit for students to adapt. By arriving early, they won't miss any class announcements or disrupt class by coming late.
- Come prepared. Class time is too short for a teacher to show up without a plan or prepared lesson/assignment. The same goes with students: there is no time to finish assignments during class time. Before class, teachers and students should look at the

previous class's notes, finish grading or assignments, and read over the new lesson to be taught/learned.

- Exude joy and excitement. Enthusiasm increases the students' motivation to learn and succeed in the course. The joy and enthusiasm shown by a teacher can ease the pain of learning for the students and instantly add interest and passion to the subject.
- Don't make excuses for mistakes. The habit of making excuses has several negative effects for students, including failing a course. There is always room for improvement and having excuses will not further a student's path to success. A teacher can set a good example for his or her students by admitting to mistakes, taking responsibility, correcting it, learning from it, and moving forward.

### **Clearly Communicate Qualities for Success**

Teachers should pass along the lessons they have learned throughout their life experience. As mentioned before, teachers are among the most influential people in a student's life and they have the unique opportunity of encouraging excellent habits in a daily setting. To communicate these qualities for success, teachers should always:

- Use the Syllabus and Classroom Policies to establish successful traits. The syllabus is a great place to motivate and encourage students to practice good habits for success. In-class policies can be used to merge good habits into the classroom structure and encourage students towards excellence in everything they do.
- Dispel pre-conceived fear of content. Any subject can be challenging when you first approach it and don't make an effort to learn. Teachers should encourage their students to tackle hard subjects with an open mind and excitement to make it easier to learn and

absorb the material. Help students take small steps to learn hard topics; this will keep them from getting discouraged and giving up.

- Provide constructive criticism. Constructive criticism combined with positive feedback encourages and motivates students to continue on with the assignment, improve their previous attempt, and succeed.

### **Provide Opportunities for Networking and Help**

There is no escaping teamwork in the working world. Networking and peer feedback are crucial skills your students will need to survive in the workplace. Likewise, it is necessary for a successful student to know where to look when they need help. Teachers should make their students aware of the campus Career Center and networking opportunities the university offers throughout the year. As a teacher, you can introduce healthy team-work attitudes and helpful tools:

- Create small group activities and projects. Divide a task between several students who will help each other learn, motivate each other to keep on working as a team, and realize success together.
- Assemble or encourage study groups. Explaining what they have learned and working through material out loud will help students understand and remember the material better.
- Encourage discussions through the forum in Moodle 2. Students learn a lot from their peers' discussions and peer review will motivate better performance.
- Provide students with helpful tools and services. Teachers share the responsibility of providing information for students to find tutoring and any other kind of educational

resources. They should be prepared to provide studying suggestions on how to organize agendas, prioritize tasks or even creating study groups.

### **Hold Regular Office Hours and Encourage Students to Attend**

Holding consistent office hours as a teacher will build a relationship of trust with the student. They will know when they can expect to communicate with you and it shows them that their grades and success in the classroom are important to you.

- Incentivize office hours. Rewarding students that visit during office hours is a great way to encourage students to make time to discuss test or project performance.
- Host small study sessions during office hours. If students shy away from creating their own study groups, encourage group sessions during office hours. Provide snacks and creative ways of learning material that wouldn't usually work in larger classroom settings.

### **Conclusion**

As students move from college into the job market and their career, the habits for success learned during college continue and help them to be successful. Thinking “win-win” will build relationships that will carry on after college giving graduates contacts inside the company to which they wish to apply. Being proactive teaches them not to fear failure or make excuses for it but to learn from the experience. Putting first things first prevents procrastination, helping to meet deadlines. Beginning with the end in mind helps graduates to set and achieve goals, planning for the future; teaching them to become a person of action.

Successful students develop and apply effective habits. These same habits carry over after graduation helping them to become successful in life. Vince Lombardi once stated, “The

price of success is hard work, dedication to the job at hand, and the determination that whether we win or lose, we have applied the best of ourselves to the task at hand” (n.d.). The ideas and techniques presented in this chapter are designed to lead students to appreciate and implement this insight.

### **Useful Tools**

Below is a list of useful resources assembled by teachers, for teachers. We recommend passing on these links and resources to your students as they continue their academic paths career.

### **UNCC Career Center for Work, Service, and Internships**

The Career Center is dedicated to providing resources for students as they decide career and begin their job searches.

<http://career.uncc.edu/>

### **UNCC Advising Center**

The Advising Center is specifically for undeclared students and students in the process of switching majors.

<http://advisingcenter.uncc.edu/>

### **UNCC Counseling Center**

The Counseling Center’s primary goal is our student’s mental health. Emergency hotlines and personal counseling information are just two of the resources they provide students.

<http://counselingcenter.uncc.edu/>

**UNCC Center for Academic Excellence**

The Center for Academic Excellence provides tools for students to assist students in their studies with resources like tutoring, academic consulting, and educational strength.

<http://ucae.uncc.edu/>

**15 Habits of Top College Students**

This is a great article put together by professors with U.S. News and World Report. It contains great habits for success that will be useful as you direct your students.

<http://www.washcoll.edu/live/files/3704-the-15-habits-of-top-college-studentspdf>

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