



Adjunct Faculty Academic Calendar

March:

- 4 Last Day to Withdraw with a "W" grade
- 7-13 Spring Break
- 14 Classes Resume
- 25 Last Day to Withdraw with a "WP" or "WF" grade

Workshops:

- 16 Tools for Formative Assessment
10:30 AM, C150
- 18 It's in the Syllabus! Or is it?
12:30 PM, C 150
- 17 No Nonsense Guide to Using e-Books
11:00 AM, Z 111

Register for these workshops and more at:

Mark Your Calendars

The Adjunct Faculty Awards Banquet will be held on Friday, April 15th in the Curtiss Banquet Rooms.

The Fall All Adjunct Faculty Orientation will be held on Thursday, August 17th in the Curtiss Banquet Rooms.

Invitations will be emailed to you so check your inbox!

Syllabus Construction: Make it something that students will actually read!

After having read the book, *Made to Stick* (Heath and Heath, 2007), team members at the Center for Teaching and Learning at the University of Minnesota went about creating a Sticky Syllabus. This idea came to them as a result of the realization that students tend not to read the course syllabus because their syllabi often resemble directions for operating a washing machine. So they went about creating a syllabus using the **SUCCES** prescription:

- **Simple:** Reduce your syllabus to simple, core messages that are essential for creating student success.
- **Unexpected:** Grab your students' attention by incorporating visuals which support the core course ideas. Use a picture of your text's cover or a visual which reflects your vision for the discipline.
- **Concrete:** Provide concrete examples of course outcomes using verbs which will tell the students what they will be learning in your course.
- **Credible:** Create credibility by providing a rationale or evidence that could motivate them to accomplish the required tasks and learn.
- **Emotional:** Address the emotional concerns of your students by articulating what you expect of them.
- **Stories:** Tell a consistent story about your class.

Interestingly, two of the components of SUCCES, credibility and emotions, are essential mechanisms in motivating students. The more credible the course and the more the emotional connection to the course, the higher the likelihood that your students will be motivated to learn.

Examples of sticky syllabi abound. If you are a Pinterest fan, a simple search for the word, "syllabus," will yield examples of ways some faculty have created syllabi that can make ideas stick!

If you would like to learn more about syllabi and work to create one that will engage your students, attend our monthly workshop titled, *It's in the Syllabus! Or is it?* on Friday, March 18th starting at 12:30 p.m. in Science East 201.

References:

- Heath, C. & Heath, D., (2008). *Made to Stick: Why some ideas survive and others die*. New York: Random House,
- Peterson, C., et al. (2013). *The Sticky Syllabus: Creating Course Guides to Motivate Your Students*. Presented at the 38th Annual POD Conference, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

The Role of Self-Concept in First Generation Student Success

First Generation students are defined by SVSU as those students whose parents did not graduate from college. National data indicate that these students are not adequately prepared for college so they tend to receive lower grades, earn less academic credits, and are, therefore, less likely to graduate (Pascarella, et al, 2003). According to DeFreitas and Rinn (2013), part of the explanation for their lower persistence rate has to do with the idea that first generation students have lower academic self-concepts.

Self-concept is an individual's estimate of their self, based upon their own experiences and their understanding of these experiences. In this instance, we are looking at how individuals judge their academic self-concept based on academic experiences. So if, for example, a student has not experienced success in a math course, they might judge themselves poorly and decide they aren't good at math. Students who have positive academic self-concepts, tend to perform better than those who don't. The result of which is higher GPAs. Interestingly, one study found that students who had high verbal and math self-concepts were more successful in all areas of study (DeFreitas and Rinn, 2003). Armed with this knowledge, faculty can intervene to help students develop higher academic self-concepts through positive interactions. The study's authors offer a few concrete suggestions to create these positive interactions:

- Develop community in your classroom. This can be done by learning your students' names, inviting small groups of students to coffee, or, if your students are successful or show improvement, note these and encourage them
- Give constructive and individualized feedback
- Make the course material relevant to your students' lives
- Allow your students to have some choice, in readings or assignments empowering them to succeed

First generation students need to be empowered and begin to develop their academic self-concept early in their academic career. Their success hangs in the balance.

References:

- DeFreitas, S. & A. Rinn. (2013, February). Academic achievement in first generation college students: The role of academic self-concept. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* (Vol.13, No. 1, pp. 57-67).
- Pascarella, E., G. Wolniak, C. Pierson & P. Terenzini. (2003). Experiences and outcomes of first-generation students in community colleges. *Journal of College Student Development* (44, pp 420).

Are you lonely?

Many faculty wonder why students don't show up for their office hours. Perhaps they don't come because they feel their professors loom larger than life. For some students, professors are exalted and that could be intimidating even for the most stellar student. Add to the mix a student who is confused over the material but is too shy to come for help, a first generation freshman that doesn't understand the importance of office hours, or male students who often tend not to seek assistance. Getting students to come for office hours is a two way street. Students need to meet their faculty half-way. They need to show up and be prepared with questions and concerns. Students need to also understand that by getting to know their professors during office hours, they might someday have the opportunity to ask for letters of recommendation or get ideas about graduate schools. On the other hand, faculty need to be approachable. Faculty need to help their students understand that they are there to teach, support, nurture, and develop them in the best way possible. So, as often as you can, encourage your students to visit you. Interactions between faculty and students can be life changing and it can be a win/win all around!