In the Loop

SV SU SAGINAW VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY®

The Office of Adjunct Faculty & Academic Support Programs

Adjunct Faculty
Academic Calendar

November:

10   Last Day to Withdraw with a "W" Grade

22-26   Thanksgiving Recess, No Classes

Workshops:

7   Canvas Open Session
10:00 AM   Z 115

10   Syllabus Make-Over and Best Practices
12:30 PM   Z223-A

22   Canvas: Modules
11:00 AM   Z 111

30   Canvas: Discussions, Groups and Peer Review
10:00 AM   Z115

Register for these and other workshops at: svsu.edu/workshops

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The following were the winners in the Count the Candy Corn (1255) in the Head Contest!

1st place: Steve Wuobio
2nd place: Brian Dalke
3rd place: Mikayla Gilbert

They had fun and won prizes!

Research Consultations!

Do you have a student struggling with research or having difficulty using the library's resources and services? If so, please let the student know they can submit an online request to meet with a reference librarian. The research consultation form will let students select the day and time that works best for them. They may also select to meet with the librarian face to face or online (via chat). After submission, a librarian will be assigned to the consultation and will reply to the student to set up the meeting details. Please let your students know this service is available and that they may request a research consultation using the online form located at the library's "Chat with Us" web site or directly at http://svsu.libsurveys.com/rcrequest

Creating Community through Your Syllabus

Cullen and Harris (2009) have written that the language and tone of your syllabus can lend itself to creating community in your classroom. One way to do this is to create a learner centered syllabus that emphases your accessibility, your learning rationale, and student-student collaboration.

- Accessiblity-simply listing office hours doesn't signal how accessible you are. But letting the students know a variety of ways they can contact you does. You should also encourage your students to visit your office or even require them to do so as a sign of your accessibility.
- Learning rationale- another way you can create community through your syllabus is to detail the rationale you have for each assignment and assessment and how these relate to your learning goals. Explain why you give exams. Explain what your exams are like. Explain why these exams are important to student learning. Let the students know why you are doing what you are doing and how these plans lead to student success.
- Collaboration- including collaborative work into your class structure can also help to grow community. Your syllabus should not only encourage student-student collaboration but also consider including it as a requirement in some of your assignments.

Just by employing these three actions, your syllabus can demonstrate your commitment to community. To learn more about syllabi and best practices, register for the workshop titled Syllabus Make-over and Best Practices is being held on Friday, November 10th at 12:30 in Z223A. You can register at www.svus.edu/workshops. Adjunct faculty receive $25 for attending workshops and a light lunch!

Reference:

Cullen, R. & Harris, M. (2009). Assessing learner-centeredness through course syllabi. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 34(1),* 115-125.

Community in the Classroom

Parker Palmer wrote, "to teach is to create a space in which a community of truth is practiced" (1999). If this is something that you understand to be important, then you must take steps to create community, by developing a positive classroom climate. The literature indicates that students' perceptions of classroom climate affects their motivation to learn, academic fulfillment, and success. The importance of creating a safe environment for learning cannot be understated. If students have a positive feeling about any particular class, they will feel safe and to be safe means that they are willing to take risks with their education to expand their knowledge. So, what are some steps that can be taken to create such a climate?

In exploring the literature, Barr (2016) offers some instructional ideas that faculty can employ:

- Personalization- instructor provides openings for student/faculty interaction and demonstrates concern with the welfare of each student.
- Involvement- active student participation is encouraged.
- Student cohesiveness- students are given the opportunity to learn about and help each other.
- Task orientation- classroom activities and assignments are clearly organized and explained well
- Innovation- faculty employ innovative, creative methods in their teaching practices.
- Academic rigor- students are challenged, stretched by the rigor of the course material.

Beyond instruction, however, faculty can work to develop a rapport with their students to create a connected classroom. The literature indicates that those faculty who develop rapport with their students express kindness and openness, and encourage student participation (Barr, 2016). Faculty can do this by employing humor and by displaying an openness about themselves; demonstrating they are flesh and blood human beings. Students report that faculty-student rapport is essential in creating a positive classroom climate.

Students also report that student-student rapport is equally important. To build student-student rapport and a safe learning environment, it helps if faculty allow the students to work side by side on the material. In doing so, students can discover that learning is a social event and can be fun. Actions such as these help to build relationships and, again, create a positive classroom climate. Activities like group work and collaboration are important ways to help build student-student rapport.

All of this goes to show that in creating a *learner-centered classroom*, where the focus is on students' perspectives, experiences, interests, needs, and capacities, faculty can foster student self-efficacy and a positive classroom climate. Differentiate this with a *teacher-centered classroom* where the focus is on manner of instruction and assessment outcomes. In such a classroom, students do not develop interpersonal relationships with their instructor or with the other students lending itself to a more negative classroom climate lacking rapport.

In sum, what are the benefits of creating a positive classroom climate? Students have deeper learning experiences in that they are motivated to learn and often discover that learning is fun! Faculty have richer, more rewarding, more satisfying experiences, as well as the knowledge that their actions are paving the way for the future as they work to create a community of learners.

References:

Barr, J.J. (2016, October). Developing a Positive Classroom Climate. *The IDEA Center, Paper #61*. Accessed from: *https://www.ideaedu.org/.../0/.../IDEA%20Papers/IDEA%20Papers/PaperIDEA_61.pdf*

Parker, P. (2008). *The Courage to Teach 2nd Edition*. Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass