Strategies to Engage Students in the Classroom

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In this session, we will:

- Describe ways to engage students and enhance learning.
- Identify strategies to create an environment for active participation.
Goals

What do you hope to gain from this session?
Ice breaker

- Introduce yourself to your partner
- Where would you like to go on vacation?
- What is your favorite flavor of ice cream?
Why use an ice breaker?

- Sets the tone for the class
- Develops a sense of community
- Creates an open environment to promote active participation
With a partner, in one minute:
list characteristics of a traditional college classroom?
What’s wrong with the 50-min lecture anyway?

- Level of engagement varies among students and across time
- Average attention span = 15 minutes!
- Doesn’t accommodate all learning styles.
- Predictable

- All *genuine* learning is active, not passive! It involves the use of the MIND, not just the *memory.*

(Adler, 1987)
How do You Engage Your Students?

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Tell me and I'll listen.
Show me and I'll understand.
Involve me and I'll learn.

*Teton Lakota Indians*
Active Learning is:

> “anything that involves students *doing things and thinking* about the things they are doing” (Bonwell and Eison, 1992)

> “anything course-related that all students in a class session are called upon to do other than simply watching, listening and taking notes” (Felder and Brent, 2009)
Engaging your audience
“Learning is not a spectator sport. Students do not learn much just by sitting in class listening to teachers, memorizing prepackaged assignments, and spitting out answers. They must talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences, apply it to their daily lives. They must make what they learn part of themselves.”
– Chickering and Gamson (1987)
Implementing active learning

- Start early – sets tone and expectation
- Establish ground rules
- Draw attention to most critical content
- Change things up every 15-20 minutes
- Vary the activities
- Explain activities before and after (takeaway)
- Get feedback about effectiveness of new techniques – adjust approach accordingly (CATs)
2012 New Student Survey

How well does the statement below describe you as a student?
Getting the best grades I can is very important to me.

- Not at all: 0%
- Somewhat: 3%
- Quite well: 13%
- Very well: 74%

Percent responding...
2012 New Student Survey

How important is it that Cornell provide you with opportunities to discover and pursue your intellectual passion?

Percent responding...

Not important at all  | Somewhat important  | Very important  | Essential
---|---|---|---
0%  | 0%  | 2%  | 76%

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Students’ Perspective (Alford, 2012):

- Helps build connections with what they’re learning
- Bring a change of pace to class sessions
- Force students to participate rather than be spectators
- Allow students to get to know one another
- Open the class to different perspectives
- Makes it easier to understand and remember the material
Active learning and lectures are NOT mutually exclusive!
Useful tools to promote engagement:

- Learn student names
- Use technology
  - Students love GOOD videos
  - Advance slides remotely
- Use humor
- Break the “boundary”
  - Walk around the classroom – talk to students during exercises
- Experiment and ADJUST!
Active Learning Techniques
Case Studies and Discussion

Discuss one of the case studies at your table.

- What would you do and why?
Goals revisited

- Was your goal achieved?
- What do you wish we had focused on or addressed during today’s session?
“Teaching is less about what the teacher does than what the teacher gets the students to do”

-David Perkins (Harvard)
Resources

- Ablconnect – Harvard
  http://ablconnect.harvard.edu/
- University of Minnesota
  http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/resources/active/
- University of Michigan
  http://www.crlt.umich.edu/tstrategies/tsal

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