Teaching College in an Age of Accountability
CHAPTER 3

Today’s College Students

FOCUS QUESTIONS

- What are the significant demographic changes among college students?
- How have perceptions toward attending college changed in the last generation?
- How should professors structure their teaching to meet the needs of today’s students?
- How might knowledge of multiple intelligences and learning styles improve outcomes?

Most of today’s professors attended college full-time shortly after completing high school, with cohorts largely similar to themselves. Sometimes they are baffled by how much students have changed. Over the last several decades, student populations at most colleges and universities have become increasingly diverse—in age, gender, ethnicity, working status, and other significant factors. To be successful, a faculty member must understand this new student population in terms not only of its demographic makeup but also of its social conditioning. This chapter will help you understand the dimensions of the increased diversity of undergraduate students and will suggest ways you can address varying student backgrounds, attitudes, and approaches to learning.

The Big Picture

According to data provided by the National Center for Educational Statistics (2001), enrollment at U.S. colleges and universities increased from 12.2 million in 1985 to 14.6 million in 1998, a 20 percent increase. The projected college
enrollment in 2010 is 17.5 million, another increase of 20 percent. Much of this increase has been, and will continue to be, due to growing numbers of part-time students, who now constitute nearly half of the total college enrollment. By the end of the first decade of the new millennium, women are expected to constitute 58 percent of the total college-going population, continuing to be the majority gender, as they have been since the mid-1980s.

Although patterns of the latter part of the twentieth century reflected a huge increase in the number of older students going to college, this trend is expected to reverse somewhat through the early part of the twenty-first century. The number of students aged eighteen to twenty-four is expected to rise to 10.5 million by 2010 (an increase of 25 percent from 1998), and their proportion within the total college population to rise to 60 percent by 2010 (from its 1990 proportion of 50 percent). Even if these predictions prove to be true, there will still be a huge population of older students, especially among the ranks of part-timers. This situation is quite different from that which existed up through the early 1980s, when even the occasional twenty-two-year-old classmate seemed somewhat exotic. While there is a great deal of common ground between students of any age, it is critical for today’s professors to understand some of the key differences between younger and older students.

In recent years, much has been written and spoken of a generational gulf—an inability or unwillingness of those in one generation to understand and value how those of markedly different ages perceive and react to the world. An ineffective professor will accept the gulf as a given, and such acceptance may contribute to the development of a fragmented classroom environment in which individuals work at cross-purposes. The enlightened professor will proactively manage the classroom so that, regardless of the course or discipline, students will learn to work cooperatively and, in the process, create a synergy that intensifies the class experience for both students and professor. Throughout the rest of this chapter, we will discuss the different “generations” of students that you are likely to see in your classrooms—usually all at the same time.

“Traditional” and “Nontraditional” Students versus Generations

Before we discuss the different generations you will see in your classrooms, let us define two common terms and explain why they may no longer apply. “Traditional” students are considered to be high school graduates who begin college at eighteen and finish at twenty-two, reside on campus, limit their work to on-campus positions, belong to campus-based social and political groups, and have yet to start families. “Nontraditional” students are those older than twenty-two, who typically reside off campus and work part-time or full-time to support themselves; these students may have already launched their chosen careers, started families, and begun to participate in the full array of adult activities.
Although, as noted above, many students still fall into the "traditional" category, they are not in the majority on many campuses. They are also nearly non-existent in evening and weekend classes, and some campuses have none at all. Because the terms traditional and nontraditional are no longer as illuminating as they once were, in most of the discussion in this chapter we will speak instead of the generations of students that we are likely to see. We will make some generalizations about these generations, but let it be stated at the outset that these generalizations are just that—general—and are thus not meant to account for every student who fits into the age range of the particular generation being discussed.

The Generational Matrix

So that you can fully understand the critical issue of generations of students, take a moment to complete the exercise in Figure 3.1. You may not be familiar with the labels, but fill in the boxes to the best of your ability. While noting that demographers disagree somewhat on the beginning and ending dates of each generation, focus on the core issues that affected the way each of the three generations described in the figure came to perceive the world. Write as many major ideas in each box as you can. Keep in mind that an entry might not fall within the parameters of the birth years provided for the generation. For example, the youngest members of the Baby Boom Generation were born in 1961, but nearly every member was dramatically affected by a historical event that came to a head around 1967 and did not conclude until the mid-1970s.

After you have filled in the matrix, see what ideas a colleague, especially one from a generation other than your own, might contribute beyond what you have identified. After brainstorming as much key information as possible, compare your completed matrix to that in Appendix 3.1. (Note there that a final set of entries has been made on the ramifications for teaching each generation.) Be aware that there are likely to be honest differences of opinion on such issues as whether the women's movement had a greater impact on the Baby Boomers, or on Generation X. When we conducted this activity in a workshop with a group of new faculty (of varying ages), we observed what could only be called a "Grand Aha!" The matrix illuminates so much of why there are differences in ways of perceiving the world among the various generations. As these differences play themselves out in a diverse classroom, they can either inhibit or foster learning among students, depending on how the professor facilitates discussions.

The Baby Boom Generation

Many professors are well acquainted with the Baby Boom Generation—because this is the generation to which they belong. The baby boom began at the end of World War II, when those who had served in the armed forces returned home
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Today's age range:</th>
<th>What historical events shaped the generation?</th>
<th>What social dynamics influenced the generation?</th>
<th>What technology had a bearing on the generation?</th>
<th>What values are shared by the generation?</th>
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<td>Baby Boom Generation (1943-1961)</td>
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FIGURE 3.1 Generational Matrix
and the United States entered into a period of postwar prosperity. Professors from this generation tended to be college students right after high school (or right after serving time in the armed forces during the Vietnam War). Going to college at age twenty is quite different from going to college at age forty-five or fifty, so even though Baby Boom Generation professors share many values with the students they have from this generation, they may find it challenging to identify with these students’ life experiences.

Baby Boom students have seen their ranks grow dramatically in recent years, especially in the evening and weekend classes that faculty members are increasingly expected to teach. Many of these students have lost their jobs to the new economy; that is, they have been displaced by technology and/or have been unable to sustain an income that would enable them to provide adequately for their families. While a disproportionate number of evening students are single mothers, many others are single men, often also with children. A fair number of these students may be grandparents and may have full responsibility for their grandchildren, for one reason or another. Some of these students lack a support system, whereas others have in place a strong system of family and longtime friends. Although their employers might have a policy of supporting their education financially, their co-workers sometimes resent their leaving work early, or arriving late, to pursue their college education.

Older students who are attending college either after a long hiatus or for the very first time frequently doubt their ability to succeed. The other time-consuming challenges in their lives—children and family, aging parents, work, and civic and religious responsibilities—often prevent them from preparing adequately for class or from coming to class regularly. These students commonly display test anxiety, a lack of confidence in their writing and mathematics skills, and hesitancy in utilizing computers and other forms of technology.

On the upside, many older students somehow make it all work. Thirsty for the knowledge they did not get when they should have, they overcome the initial obstacles of attending college, achieve a measure of success, and become quite self-directed. They are motivated first to pass and then to achieve high grades. Older adult learners often become overachievers who will rewrite entire papers to gain an extra point or two. While younger students sometimes demand special privileges as their right, many older students will not ask for the smallest extra consideration (e.g., permission to turn in a project a few days late).

As their successes grow, older students often become highly motivated to serve as role models for their children or even grandchildren, who may be struggling in school. They often speak of posting their successful exams and assignments on the family refrigerator. Younger students often mask their disappointments behind a blank countenance, but older students tend to display their feelings openly on their faces or in their voices. Older students are far more likely to stay after class to share their frustrations with an empathetic instructor and/or to discuss stimulating concepts from the course material. In the process,
it is not uncommon for them to develop emotional reliance, or even a crush, on the professor—a situation that requires careful handling.

Many older students learn best by doing—that is, by applying the theory of textbooks to the rich set of experiences they have accumulated over the years and to the reality of tomorrow at work. They have a great deal they want to share, and they will usually do so in a safe, informal environment. In the process, they make connections for themselves with the learning goals of the course—and for other students in the class who may not have anywhere near the experience that these older students do. Baby Boomers tend to be problem-centered, rather than content-centered, and will often lose focus with an instructor who is intent merely on getting through the material. Adult learners, recalling the classrooms of their childhood, tend to respond most effectively when the classroom environment is organized and relatively quiet, and when they perceive they have ready access to the instructor, even though they might not take advantage of that access.

**Generation X**

Students in the generation following that of the rebellious Boomers are staying close to home to attend college, while working full- or part-time. Many have been at least partially supporting themselves for several years and have accumulated significant debt due to tuition costs that have been rising at rates faster than the inflation rate or to the purchase of items that were once considered luxuries but are now seen as necessities for students (cars, electronic equipment, etc.).

Generation X students are more likely than students of previous generations to come from families that do not conform to the nuclear pattern (two parents, married, and two or more children at home). Their parents may have divorced one or more times, remarried, and/or formed blended families. Other students are the children of parents who have never been married. Such situations may have contributed to the stifling of psychological and academic development during the student’s most formative years, residually affecting their college-age performance.

The Baby Boomer parents of students in this age bracket are likely to have been employed under the unsettling circumstances of downsizing and rightsizing and to have changed jobs and residences. As a result, Generation X children changed elementary and secondary schools far more often than was the custom a few decades before. Such students often exhibit socialization problems throughout their college years, isolating themselves, becoming medically depressed and sometimes turning to unhealthy lifestyles. Many Generation X students were “latchkey kids” and may have been entertained frequently by television programs and videos with violent and otherwise negative themes. Their parents, exhausted when they arrived home after working long hours and traveling an extended commute, often did not read to them nor provide coaching for homework assignments during their early years.
Likely to have worked part-time while in high school—often well past what most would consider reasonable hours—today’s “twenty-to-thirty something” college students have not been as focused on school success as those of two decades ago. Because of their employment, they are less likely than their predecessors to have played organized sports or been involved in other constructive school activities. When they were barely old enough to drive an automobile, some even maintained their own households, frequently cohabitating with equally unsophisticated peers. They may have engaged in other adult experiences for which they were insufficiently prepared and have developed extensive coping mechanisms for dealing with the challenges of their lives. Without structure and consistently communicated standards, many Generation Xers have not developed the self-discipline typically associated with success in higher education.

From another perspective, Generation X students have grown up in a society largely influenced by consumerism, materialism, increased demands for individual rights, and decreased time horizons for nearly everything. One fast-food chain promised to deliver its products “your way”—a theme that has been replicated in thousands of advertising messages that have inundated the minds of students in this age bracket. Conditioned by Watergate, Three Mile Island, insider trading, and other high-profile business scandals, these students have developed cynicism and lack of respect for all authority figures—including, not surprisingly, college professors. Speaking spontaneously and angrily of the alleged misdeeds of others and lodging complaints—even lawsuits—have become common behaviors. Students of this generation are quick to proclaim their rights. Some perceive professors as service providers, class attendance as a matter of individual choice, and grades as “pay” to which they are entitled for meeting what they perceive to be reasonable standards.

A litany of reasons—including but certainly not limited to depersonalized schools, teacher-turnover rates, and overemphasis on standardized tests—have contributed to a less than effective primary and/or secondary education for many students. A large number of Generation X students began college and required remediation in reading, writing, and mathematics skills (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). Conditioned by the hours they have spent surfing through MTV and dozens of other cable channels, playing computer games, and enjoying instantaneous access to the entire world through the Internet and other widespread technology, these students often exhibit extremely short attention spans and an affinity for color and rapid movement—qualities difficult to re-create in many traditional classrooms. These students have heard themselves identified as members of Generation X and they perceive the outside world as disliking them or, perhaps even worse, being unwilling to invest the time to understand them. The results are boredom, negativity, and lowered academic expectations that exhibit themselves in the classroom.

Many college professors become frustrated when students of Generation X do not appear as responsible and appreciative as they remember students of their generation to be. However, investing quality effort only with those students
who display more conservative, traditional values is not a prescription for achieving learning success. All educators have a responsibility to all students—and to the profession—to accept all students where they are and to guide them toward an outcome that our highest standards indicate is appropriate. As you will recall from Chapter 2, Stephen Covey, himself a professor and author of The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, encourages us to “seek first to understand, then to be understood.” To achieve success with Generation X students, professors must adopt this habit.

The Millennial Generation

There is a new generation beginning to grace the doors of colleges and universities—the Millennial Generation. Neil Howe and William Strauss, authors of Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation (2000), have defined this generation as follows:

As a group, Millennials are unlike any other youth generation in living memory. They are more numerous, more affluent, better educated, and more ethnically diverse. More important, they are beginning to manifest a wide array of positive social habits that older Americans no longer associate with youth, including a new focus on teamwork, achievement, modesty, and good conduct. (p. 4)

This generation, born between 1982 and 2000, is beginning to make their presence known in the college classroom. Most do not want to be lumped in with the Generation Xers, whom they find to be negative, cynical, unfocused, rule-breaking slackers. Millennials are very clear on how different they are, and they want to be recognized as such.

The children and young adults of this generation typically feel more wanted than those of any previous generation. Their parents may have gone to great lengths to conceive them, and they have heard the media broadcast the fact that the United States is now a child-centered society. From the chief executive to individual parents, we are seeing an unprecedented focus on children and what is good for them.

Some of this focus has resulted in a generation that has been supervised more closely, has spent more time with parents, and has done more things that are family-oriented than some state-of-the-family critics would have us believe. Compared to previous generations, Millennials are growing up with a better sense of self and of the possibilities for the future. The Millennial Generation is more optimistic, not only about the future of society but also about themselves and what they can achieve. This certainly has potentially positive ramifications for the college classroom.

Millennials entering the college arena have grown up in an era of increased academic standards and high-stakes testing. Many are signing up for advanced
placement or other types of more intensive high school classes and are striving for high grades. In addition, students in this generation feel pressured about getting accepted to the college of their choice. We hear constantly about the amazing curriculum vitae that students have already compiled by the time they leave high school—and still are not admitted to their schools of choice because of the intense competition. So, depending on the college or university where you teach, you may have some students from this generation who are thrilled and thankful to be there—and others who feel they had to settle and therefore have a different attitude. (Leaders would be wise to be mindful of acceptance pressures as they admit their new classes—so that all students are given the sense that they are fortunate to have been chosen and that the institution is proud to have them.)

In addition to being the largest generation (potentially 100 million when new immigrants are counted), Millennials are the most ethnically diverse generation. African Americans, who up to now had constituted the largest minority population, have been surpassed in number by Latinos. While professors may see the college classroom as becoming more diverse, Millennials may not see anything unusual or different. Large numbers of students have grown up in schools and neighborhoods that were populated by more than one race, and significantly large numbers of Millennials are the result of unions between parents of more than one race.

As you prepare to teach increasing numbers of diverse students, be aware of the array of benefits that can arise from working in teams—an environment in which your students are likely to be comfortable. Millennials also want to know what the rules are—not so they can break them, but so they can follow them. These students are used to feeling pressure, which does not mean that they enjoy it, but they have experience with the drive that it takes to succeed. And, although it may seem to go without saying, integrating technology into your courses and your expectations for student work will be mandatory. This is the first generation that will use technology from cradle to grave. It is a natural part of their lives and what they do both with their free time and with their work time, so they would notice its absence far sooner than they would remark on its presence.

As with the other generations presented, the information offered here is general and certainly does not apply to every member of the generation. The themes are what we must attend to—and all signs point to some positive themes running through the Millennial Generation (Howe and Strauss, 2000).

**Emerging Influences**

Proactive faculty members must continuously seek to understand the perspectives of students, not only through research reports and talking with colleagues but also through listening intently and nonjudgmentally to individual students themselves. They need to identify well in advance any differences among students that might become evident in the classroom and influence learning. They also
need to incorporate students’ knowledge base into the richer environment that is created when more diverse perspectives are represented. Professors may be hired to teach a particular course, but their role may be more appropriately defined as creating an environment and providing appropriate stimuli for students to master a particular set of concepts, skills, and/or attitudes. The ultimate goal is to equip students to become their own lifelong teachers.

Besides the generation to which students belong, other factors have a significant impact on their perceptions of college and the way they prefer to learn. Today 25 percent of all undergraduate students are members of minority groups, a figure that has doubled in the last twenty years. The sharpest percentage growth in minority enrollment in recent years has occurred among Asian Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans. While we might debate the merit of various initiatives that have fostered this increase, most would agree that our society becomes stronger when those previously left out of higher education now participate in greater numbers. In many metropolitan colleges and universities, recent immigrants are an especially significant student population. Professors must be sensitive to their students’ ethnicity, language, religion, culture, and sexual orientation, for each of these factors influences students’ learning paradigms. The successful professor views these differences as an opportunity rather than a threat.

Multiple Intelligences

Research of recent years tells us that there is not a single form of intelligence. When professors accept only the traditional definition of the word intelligence, they foster an atmosphere in which too many students are likely to fail. Seeking to broaden the scope of human potential beyond the traditional IQ score, Howard Gardner (1999), renowned for having developed the most well-known theory of multiple intelligences, defines intelligence as “a biopsychological potential to process information that can be activated in a cultural setting to solve problems or create products that are of value in a culture” (p. 34).

Gardner has challenged the validity of measuring intelligence by taking people out of their natural learning environments and asking them to complete isolated tasks they have never done before. His position that intelligence has more to do with solving problems and creating products in a context-rich environment has grown from his research, which now yields nine comprehensive categories, or what have come to be called intelligences:

- Verbal/linguistic intelligence—the capacity to use words effectively (think Toni Morrison). Students who possess this intelligence have generally been successful in school because their intelligence lends itself to traditional teaching.
- Logical/mathematical intelligence—the capacity to reason and to employ numbers effectively (think Alan Greenspan). In addition to the students who
possess high verbal/linguistic intelligence, the students in this group also
tend to do well in traditional classrooms where teaching is logically sequenced
and students are asked to conform.
- Visual/spatial intelligence—the ability to accurately manipulate mental rep-
  resentations of large or small spaces (think Chuck Yeager or Bobby Fischer).
  These learners like to see what is being talked about in order to understand.
- Bodily/kinesthetic intelligence—expertise in using the entire body to express
  ideas and feelings (think Ichiro Suzuki or Michelle Kwan). Through their
  constant movement and expressive body language these students often give
  the professor every indication of what sort of intelligence they possess.
- Musical intelligence—the capacity to perceive, discriminate, transform, and
  express musical forms effectively (think Yo-Yo Ma). These learners use pat-
  terns, rhythms, instruments, and musical expression to represent their world.
- Interpersonal intelligence—the ability to perceive and make distinctions in
  the moods, motivations, and feelings of other people (think Dr. Phil
  McGraw). These learners are noticeably people-oriented and outgoing and
  do well working in groups or with a partner.
- Intrapersonal—self-knowledge and the ability to act adaptively on the basis
  of that knowledge (think Meryl Streep). These learners may tend to be more
  reserved, but they are actually quite intuitive about what they learn and how
  it relates to them.
- Naturalist—recognizing patterns in the living world (think Charles Dar-
  win). A student possessing the naturalist intelligence demonstrates an ease
  in identifying and classifying living things.
- Existentialist—a proclivity for asking the fundamental questions about life
  (think the Dalai Lama). This is Gardner's newest intelligence, and one that
  is likely to be more extensively explored in the coming decade. Those with
  the existentialist intelligence ask questions like "Why are we here?" and
  "What is our role in the world?"

It is likely that as you read through the brief descriptions listed above, you
found yourself described by at least one—and it is also likely that you closely iden-
tified your academic field with one of the intelligences. For example, if you are
an art professor, it would not be surprising if you believe that you possess visual/spa-
tial intelligence and that your students (well, your best students) also possess this
intelligence. Likewise, if you are working with graduate students who are prepa-
ring to be clinical psychologists, we hope you see evidence of both interpersonal
and intrapersonal intelligence in them.

Some educators have taken the concept of multiple intelligences and made
it into a cottage industry. A few have even promoted the teaching of every con-
cept in a way that addresses all intelligence types, but Gardner himself has rejected
such ideas. Our intention here is not to introduce you to a complex concept in
an oversimplified way, but rather to alert you to the fact you will have students
whose talents and problem-solving abilities support their learning in a variety of
ways. Your students’ talents and abilities may or may not be well suited to the content and style of your teaching. If not, then both you and your students must put forth more effort in order for them to learn.

In the traditional paradigm, students either possess intelligence or they lack it. In Gardner’s paradigm, students have more of, or less of, a wider variety of intelligences. In the process of helping all students in your class approach their fullest potential, not by imposing preconceived limitations but by proactively soliciting their individual input into learning decisions that have an impact on them, both your job and your perception of the human development process will become far more rewarding.

Understanding generations and diversity of students, multiple intelligences, and individual learning styles will help you view each student as unique. Get to know each one of your students as well as you can: welcome and get to know them at the first class meeting, review their completed student profile, and require them to visit you during office hours. Throughout the term, build an ongoing dialogue with individual students that will enhance your insights and foster students’ willingness to approach you. We believe you will usually experience markedly improved motivation and attention levels, which will translate later into improved retention and completion rates. One of the greatest rewards of teaching is allowing yourself to be sufficiently vulnerable so that you empower students to share their thoughts and feelings with you and with their peers. It is critical that you regularly assess your values and predispositions and that you share discussions with both veteran as well as new instructors. Their feedback can help you deepen your own understanding.

**Common Problem Situations**

Regardless of the demographic makeup of your institution’s student body, you can consistently encourage self-direction and responsibility in all students. Our society seems to have instilled a sense of victimization among those who face challenges; such students will judge your standards and procedures accordingly. Be intellectually prepared and consistently willing to push students to turn out their best work. They may resist at first, but most will finish the term thanking you for helping them meet your high expectations.

Some students, especially those with low self-esteem or especially difficult histories, may challenge your best-intended words as discriminatory. Following the suggestions in Chapter 5 for proactively building your understanding of your students early in the course will help with problems that arise later on. It is critical that in preparing each class meeting you think through your words on topics related to sex, race, politics, or any other potentially sensitive area. Doing so can help you prevent challenges or meet any that are raised. Common problems you can expect from students are tardiness, absenteeism, test anxiety, and lack of focus. Rather than becoming upset and taking punitive action, you should plan
for these situations and build solutions into the design of your course. You can minimize the disruptions caused by tardy entry into your classroom, for example, by reserving a section of the room for late arrivals. Should you find several weeks into the course that the overwhelming majority of your students come in late, you might enlist the class’s help in finding solutions that will allow everyone to experience the class fully and achieve the learning objectives.

We believe that when the professor makes a concerted effort to foster a learning relationship with each student early in the term (see strategies in Chapter 5) and establishes an effective learning environment, absences, motivation problems, inappropriate behavior, and other such problems will largely take care of themselves. Retention will improve incrementally. While there will always be a handful of students whose behavior is inconsistent with your acceptable standards, it is critical not to punish the entire group because of the actions of a few. The key is to uncover the root cause by listening actively. You can then address the problem in an objective, frank manner that preserves the dignity of the student. As in most other arenas of life, ignoring the problem and hoping it will fix itself can only lead to unsatisfactory results. From the first class meeting, it is critical to demonstrate structure, establish your standards, reinforce those standards through consistent behavior, and take action promptly when warranted (McKeachie, 2001).

In an age of accountability, each professor is obligated to adopt a proactive posture toward potential extreme behavior than was previously required. Triggered by some of the factors identified in the discussion of generations earlier in the chapter, a very small minority of students may encounter emotional challenges, abuse substances, commit crimes, or even contemplate suicide. Become familiar with your campus resources so that when a student divulges troubling information during an office visit, you are able to make an informed referral. Use the student profile forms you collected in the beginning to track patterns of behavior in case you need to refer to them later.

**What Students Want from College Instructors**

Although each student subgroup has particular characteristics that affect the dynamics of a college learning environment, what students need from their college instructors is fairly consistent among all groups and types. Students want instructors to:

- Know them and care about them.
- Give clear, consistent expectations of student performance that are reasonable in quantity and quality.
- Be sensitive to the diverse demands on students and be flexible in accommodating them.
- Use class time effectively.
Create a classroom environment that values student input into decisions and dialogue and protects their dignity.

- Present a classroom demeanor that includes humor and spontaneity.
- Design assessments that are clearly tied to the information addressed in class, appropriate to the level of the majority of students in the class, punctually graded and returned, and used fairly to determine final class grades.
- Consistently show positive treatment of individual students, which includes being willing to spend extra time prior to or following class meetings to provide additional support as needed.

In *Making the Most of College: Students Speak Their Minds* (2001), Richard Light reports students believe that they:

- Learn through extracurricular activities (participation should be encouraged by professors).
- Learn more in classes that are highly structured, with many and frequent assessment activities.
- Are more successful in their homework when they study with others rather than alone.
- Benefit markedly from mentoring opportunities with faculty.
- Learn much from their diverse peers when activities are effectively orchestrated.
- Benefit most when they are taught to manage their time to include opportunities for interaction focused on academic pursuits.
- Care about becoming better writers.
- Benefit from coaching in study skills.
- Are especially enthusiastic about literature and foreign-language study.

While perhaps surprising in many ways, these findings show that professors can have a rich impact on the lives of today's students—students who not only have high expectations but who are also willing to invest of themselves to receive the fullest possible benefits from their college experiences.

**Students with Special Needs**

One of the most drastic changes on college and university campuses in recent years has been the influx of those with physical, mental, or psychological disabilities. Like other minority groups, students with disabilities (and their families) have become quite politically active and assertive—expecting the educational community to more fully address their specific needs. Professors would do well to accommodate such reasonable requests. (Note: Generally, there is an office of support for students with disabilities on campus. Those who work in these offices can offer instructors counsel and suggestions.)
New state and federal laws require postsecondary institutions to adopt policies that will guarantee all students who disclose their disabilities full access to educational resources. Since these provisions have the backing of the courts, you must ensure that accommodations are made for any students in your classes who have disclosed special needs.

There are several ways to determine what special needs students might have. Like a growing number of institutions, the University of Nevada, Reno, now requires all course syllabi to contain some version of the following statement:

Each student who qualifies with a disability is to provide the instructor with a letter from the Disability Resource Center on campus stating the appropriate accommodations for this course. If you have a documented disability and wish to discuss how these academic accommodations will be implemented for this course, please contact the instructor as soon as possible.

Even if you have not been told to use such a statement in your course syllabi, it would be prudent to find out if you are required to include one and, if so, what the proper wording is. Even if there is not a requirement, however, we believe it is incumbent on you as a responsible faculty member to add such a statement to your syllabi and then to make every effort to accommodate students who respond.

Using a student profile form will allow students to share their needs with you privately. Asking the students to talk to you about their challenges during their initial office visit will help you organize learning materials to accommodate their needs. For example, one of the authors of this book had a class in which there were two students with special needs. Lydia was legally blind, having only one functioning eye, which she used to read magnified text. Although she was quite adept at using the computer, she frequently needed extra time to complete in-class examinations and other written work because it took her longer than her classmates to proofread her responses. Lydia used “readers” (peer volunteers) to help her get through the massive amounts of required reading for the class. Several accommodations were made for Lydia, including:

- Reproducing print materials in large-size type and sending them to her as e-mail attachments. Thus, Lydia could enlarge materials further if necessary and was not subject to scrutiny from her peers.
- Making an extra copy of all transparencies used in class lectures so that Lydia could enlarge and review them at home.
- Producing a copy of all examinations in large-size print and allowing Lydia to use her laptop with accompanied magnifier to answer the questions. Following consultation with the professor, Lydia was given additional time to complete examinations.
Announcing to the class, with Lydia’s permission, that Lydia had lost one of her readers and could not locate another. Several students volunteered to help.

Natasha was another special-needs student; she had a neurological problem that affected her muscles. She could not sit in one position for longer than fifteen or twenty minutes, and her hands would get sore if she tried to take notes for too long. At times, she had massive muscular spasms and needed to lie down to relieve the pain. Accommodations for Natasha were relatively simple:

- She brought a lounge chair to class that was set up in the back of the room, away from the main traffic flow. She took a seat on an aisle in the class, but after fifteen to twenty minutes she would move to the lounge chair and stretch out. During the three-hour class sessions, she would rotate between a regular seat, the lounge chair, and standing.
- She recorded the lectures and other classroom activities on audiotape and supplemented these recordings with notes she could take. Other students shared their notes with her.
- Because of her inability to sit for extended periods, Natasha was given additional time to complete in-class examinations. Although she never asked for more time for out-of-class assignments, it was rather common knowledge that she required longer to complete assignments than did other students, except perhaps for Lydia.

Accommodating both Lydia and Natasha was not difficult. Fellow students understood the accommodations and volunteered to help any way they could. They were particularly helpful during group presentations, making sure that these two young women had roles that they could fulfill without undue hardship. Both of these students had excellent verbal communication skills and often were central to the presentations; other students provided visual aids and supplementary resources that fostered the learning of all. Rather than being a hardship, accommodating these students was a rich learning opportunity for the rest of the class.

While we typically think in terms of teaching accounting, world religions, or some other course or of teaching night students, athletes, or some other group, those professors who derive the greatest reward from their teaching careers, and demonstrate the greatest accountability to diverse stakeholders, have adopted a different paradigm. They see their classrooms as mosaics made up of individuals—each with a unique background of academic, occupational, family, social, economic, military, recreational, and other categories of experiences. Such teachers are energized by students who are “in the dark” because they relish the challenge of helping these students “turn on the light.” Such professors view differences of opinions as adding depth to the classroom rather than challenging
their authority. They view themselves as facilitators of learning rather than “sages on the stage.”

Summary of Key Points

- Today’s college students are far more likely to be older and part-time than those of previous times.
- For very understandable reasons, many Generation X college students lack self-discipline and academic foundation.
- The newest generation of college students (the Millennials) are more eager to learn, to engage, and to make a difference.
- Students of whatever age or generation have challenges, issues, and constraints that affect their level of involvement in college.
- The concept of multiple intelligences is worth further study because it helps make professors more sensitive to the variety of ways in which students process information.
- More and more students with disabilities are enrolling in college. Professors have a responsibility to support their learning in appropriate ways.
- Professors should anticipate common student success problems prior to the class and design solutions into the course.

Through the Professors’ Eyes

KIM: After meeting two of my classes, I am so excited about the term ahead! My students know so much from their employment and other experiences. One had even been a missionary in my home country. Some of my students are several years older than I am, and sometimes they intimidate me. I know that should not be so, and I will work to overcome it. I like the fact that most of my students are technologically astute; that will make it easier for me. I want to integrate technology into my classes, making it possible to shift the focus of the class away from my lack of command of English. The Web makes it so easy for me to find sources to use in my classes, and I think the students I have met so far will respond well. Dr. Zhang called me today, and we are having lunch tomorrow to discuss a possible mentoring relationship.

DALE: This generation of students is a real trip. They expect me to make all of the adjustments because they lead such busy lives! What they really need to do is prioritize their lives. Their education should be their number one priority and everything else should take a backseat. So many of the students put education at the bottom of their list of priorities and then complain when the work gets too heavy or too hard. I don’t have much patience with their whin-
ing. They need to learn how to work harder and smarter, and then everything would be okay. I see no need to change my expectations or ways of teaching.

**PAT:** While today’s generation of students is very different from the young people I taught early on in my career, I certainly don’t believe they’re less bright. Students have so many more obligations and pressures than those of three decades ago, many of which, like families spread all over the world, they didn’t ask for. In one class, I have a large number of thirty-somethings who are juggling work, parenting, and school. I also have a few older students who are upgrading their careers, and five special-needs students. One is in a wheelchair, three have various learning disabilities, and one is deaf. Wow! When I was in graduate school, we marched for civil rights in our society, but having these students who used to be so marginalized from society is a different kind of civil rights story! I am not always sure how to accommodate these special students’ needs without altering my expectations for them. I don’t think I should make my classes easy, but I need to think about how to adjust assignments to challenge and provide meaningful learning opportunities for students, without overburdening their time. I really need to think more about the diversity that exists in my classes and use it as a learning resource. I truly want to meet their needs, but I don’t want to compromise my standards. There’s an old story about what poor students today’s young people are that is attributed to Socrates, so it seems that every generation has bemoaned the quality of its students. I’m afraid that when we say we can’t teach them, we’re creating a self-fulfilling prophecy that blocks us from being as proactive as we should be.

**Tips for Thriving**

The most effective facilitators of learning discovered long ago the value of feedback to individual students. The qualities of feedback that enable the most marginal students to thrive are FAST—Frequent, Accurate, Specific, and Timely. As will be discussed in Chapter 9, technology can be an especially useful tool to achieve frequency and timeliness, as can more proactive emotional intelligence applied in the classroom. Accuracy and specificity require early progress on Covey’s Habit 5—Seek first to understand, then to be understood—which can be developed through extensive review of information provided on individual student profile forms and individual conferences early in the term. Our experience shows that professors who provide FAST feedback—using an array of high tech-and high-touch methods—develop a natural attraction for students that solves most any recruitment problems for subsequent terms and achieves student retention and course completion goals far above the norm for their departments.
SUGGESTED READINGS


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What historical events shaped the generation?</th>
<th>Baby Boom Generation</th>
<th>Thirteenth Generation (Generation X)</th>
<th>Millennial Generation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GI Bill</td>
<td>Born between 1943 and 1961</td>
<td>Fall of Communism</td>
<td>Oklahoma City bombing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean and Cold Wars</td>
<td></td>
<td>AIDS epidemic</td>
<td>Columbine massacre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Launch of Sputnik, NDEA</td>
<td></td>
<td>Challenger explosion</td>
<td>Extenderd economic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuban missile crisis</td>
<td></td>
<td>Wedding of Charles and Diana</td>
<td>prosperity</td>
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<td>Vietnam War</td>
<td></td>
<td>Stock market downturn</td>
<td>War in Kosovo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assassinations of JFK, RFK, MLK, Malcolm X,</td>
<td></td>
<td>(1987)</td>
<td>Clinton scandal,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Lennon</td>
<td></td>
<td>Desert Storm</td>
<td>impeachment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Antiwar movement</td>
<td></td>
<td>Princess Diana’s death</td>
<td>O. J. Simpson trial</td>
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<td>Civil rights movement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rodney King riots</td>
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<td>Woodstock</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Terrorist attack on</td>
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<tr>
<td>Man landed on moon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>World Trade Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s movement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and Pentagon, and</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>aftermath</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What social dynamics influenced the generation?</th>
<th>2–3 children per family</th>
<th>1–2 children per family</th>
<th>1 planned child per family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Families moved away from small towns and big cities, but revisited often</td>
<td>Divorce reached 50 percent</td>
<td>Parents protect, plan children’s futures (soccer moms)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Beginning of suburbia</td>
<td>Child custody issues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mom’s outside work provided supplemental income</td>
<td>Mom’s outside work provided essential family income</td>
<td>Grew up with integrated schools, metal detectors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illicit drug use</td>
<td>Latchkey children common</td>
<td>Falling divorce, abortion, child abuse, and crime</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Neighborhood schools</td>
<td>Blended families</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>School consolidation</td>
<td>Single heads of households</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Interstate highways</td>
<td>Rise of European Union and Pacific Rim economies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Downsizing of corporations</td>
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<td>Prolonged economic</td>
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<td>bcom</td>
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<tr>
<td>What technology had a bearing on the generation?</td>
<td>Baby Boom Generation</td>
<td>Thirteenth Generation (Generation X)</td>
<td>Millennial Generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born between 1943 and 1961</td>
<td>Automobile, The Pill, Mainframe computers, Black-and-white television in most homes, Plastics, Shopping malls</td>
<td>Calculators, transistors, Computer games, Color, cable television in child's room, Push-button telephones</td>
<td>Personal computers, The Internet, Multichannel television, Remote control, Beepers and cellular phones, Nintendo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| What values are shared by the generation? | Rebellious, Challenge status quo, Get on with changes, Question authority | Disconnected, Fragmented, Freelancers, Importance of education and training, Delayed emotional development | Values-conscious, Team-oriented, Increasing respect for authority |

| Ramifications for teaching members of the generation? | Provide latitude in assignments that foster personal benefits, Provide well-supported positions during discussions, Encourage reworking of assignments for higher grade | Provide lots of structure and support, Limit lecture time to twenty-minute segments, Increase use of visual aids “Sell” personal benefits of course and assignments | Infuse technology into instruction, Use team-based methods of instruction, Provide opportunities for “service learning”, Reinforce ethics and professional standards |

FOCUS QUESTIONS

- How do you design quality into the courses you will teach?
- Why is the syllabus critical to the success of your course?
- What elements and characteristics should an effective syllabus possess?
- What resources should you consider incorporating into your course design?

One of the primary themes threaded throughout this book is that accountability requires professors to think more strategically than ever before about their teaching and the learning they intend to foster. Teaching strategically means that there is a plan and a customized design for ensuring that students meet specific, valid learning objectives. It means that each professor’s courses coordinate with others within a specific curriculum to eliminate gaps and minimize overlaps. The goal is to design and build quality and accountability into each course and degree program, not to have it “inspected in” after the fact by those with a less grounded understanding of effective education. Within this and subsequent chapters, we will employ the following three definitions:

1. Strategic teaching: instruction that is deliberately and intentionally designed to achieve a particular effect or learning goal. Although students can (and do) learn through serendipitous experiences in the classroom, they learn more, and more of what professors want them to learn, when professors have carefully considered the desired learning outcomes and then have deliberately planned instruction so that these learning outcomes are achieved. Strategic teaching will increase student achievement in the classroom.
2. **Strategic learning**: learning that is deliberate and conscious. Students who are strategic learners are mindful of their strengths and weaknesses as learners and of what they must do to be effective and efficient during the learning process. Professors can expedite students’ learning by making sure that they know how to learn and are intentional in their learning. Ensuring that students are strategic learners will serve them while they are in college as well as throughout the rest of their lives.

3. **Strategic course planning**: course planning that is deliberate, intentional, and considered, with the overall objective being to ensure student learning. Strategic course planners focus on their destination and then determine how to get all students there efficiently and effectively.

In this chapter, we will concentrate on ways to design a course so that your students learn what you want them to learn and so that the experience is positive and successful for everyone.

**Designing an Effective Course**

Your role in actual course design might vary between two extremes. If yours is a standard lower-division course, your department might already have designated an outline, a syllabus, a textbook, and course materials and activities that you are expected to use so that all students are equally prepared for advanced courses. If this is the case, you may be required to do little more than embellish the course material with your personal experiences and insights. More likely, however, as a recognized expert in your field, you will be asked to design and manage all aspects of courses that you are especially qualified to teach. The demands of designing a course from scratch may be daunting, but the rewards can be substantial. Between these extremes is a whole continuum of possibilities. Regardless of your position on this continuum, you must understand the basic processes of course design, since the design you choose may have a long-term impact on students.

The following sections describe items that should go into most course syllabi. As you read each section, we encourage you to apply the suggestions to an upcoming course you must plan. Note, however, that although we have laid out these suggestions as if they occur as a series of steps, strategic course planning is actually quite recursive. One does not move linearly from step to step to step, but rather from one step to another, then back to a previous step, then forward, then back, and so on until all the elements coalesce into a comprehensive whole, driven and supported by sound instructional objectives. The essence of strategic planning is making sure that there is consistency between and among the various components of the course and its syllabus.

At this point, you might want to get a legal pad, a pen or pencil, materials that will enable you to flag key sections, and a copy of your institution’s or department’s catalog. If you prefer, you might also want to sit at your computer as we review each element of your strategic course planning.
1. Title
First identify the official name of the course, so that you remain focused in your planning. Remember, strategic course planning involves identifying a target and then considering potential tactics for reaching that target.

2. Official Catalog Description
Write out the catalog description of the course. It may be worded exactly as you would have written it (maybe you did write it), or it may no longer match what the course is conceived to be. Either way, you need to know what the catalog says, and you should provide the catalog description in your syllabus. If there is a perfect match between the catalog wording and your concept of the course, fine. If not, then either adjust your plan for what you are going to teach or tell students that there has been a shift in focus, and why.

3. Your Description
Most college or university catalogs wisely limit the number of words that can be used in the official course description. Even if you are planning to teach exactly what the catalog description says, expand that description so that it no longer sounds like a telegram. Use words that your students will easily understand. In a succinct paragraph, identify the nature and overall goals of the course. While primarily for the benefit of students, this tactic also helps you stay focused on your target in planning and teaching the course.

4. Purpose
You may eventually fold the purpose of the course in with its description, but at this point specify (again, for students and for yourself) the purpose on its own. Is the purpose to build writing skills? To enhance critical thinking? To explore career options in the health professions? To learn methods of teaching mathematics? The possibilities are endless, of course, but in a sentence or two, tell why this course is being taught. You may find this easy to do or you may find it difficult, but either way, invest the time to do it.

5. Prerequisites, Co-requisites, and Other Requirements
Often the information on prerequisites and other such requirements is listed in the catalog. If so, find out if it is valid. Were the prerequisites decided years ago and no one has since paid attention? Or are these valid, rigid requirements that you will need to enforce? Also, can you assume that the prerequisites give a particular knowledge base? (Note: This assumption—a dangerous one—will be
addressed in Chapter 7.) If this information is not readily available, ask a knowledgeable person within your department. It is better to know ahead of time whether you can count on (and/or must police for) prerequisites.

If your course has official prerequisites, identify their names and call numbers. Avoid adding prerequisites that may frustrate potential students and limit the enrollment in your course. It is unlikely that increasingly cost-conscious administrators or other stakeholders will support such a tactic. Contemporary educators view this section of their course description as a tool for helping students make informed decisions on whether their enrollment is likely to lead to success.

In addition to traditional prerequisites, are there any other requirements or necessary preconditions for this course? For example, must students already be admitted to a particular program? Are they expected to have their graduate committee formed prior to enrollment in this class? Do they need to be enrolled in another course (a co-requisite) while they are in yours? Strategic professors know the answers to these questions, and they make sure their students know the answers too.

6. Description of the Students

Your work on the preceding issues should enable you to identify what kinds of students will likely enroll in your course. If you have taught the course before, you may be right on target with your description. If not, you may or may not be able to predict who your students will be. Either way, you should write a description of students who have enrolled in the course and add it to the syllabus so that prospective students will know whether they “match” the criteria.

7. Goals and Objectives

Identifying course learning objectives is one of the most difficult yet necessary aspects of strategic course planning. Typically, students are not as attentive to the course goals and objectives as you might wish them to be. However, that fact should not diminish your commitment to this core process of strategic teaching.

For the aims of this chapter, we define goals as “the broad purposes toward which your teaching is directed.” Objectives are defined as “the more specific learning outcomes you are seeking.” Although there are some who use these terms interchangeably, we think there is value in thinking about them separately.

Write down one to five goals you have for your class, remembering to think broadly. Complete this sentence: “As a result of being participating members of my class this semester, students will ______________.” Examples might be “develop an appreciation for poetry,” “realize that accounting is not just about numbers,” “develop a sense that they are capable of speaking in public more effectively than they thought they were,” or “find out whether they are suitable for work in a hospital setting.” Strategic course planning requires an understanding of the three domains of learning: (1) the psychomotor domain, which includes physical skills and
dexterity; (2) the affective domain, which includes attitudes, character issues, appreciation of beauty, and the like; and (3) the cognitive domain, which includes the thought processes. Your course may or may not have goals or objectives in all three, but it is likely to have at least some within the cognitive domain.

While you may identify only a few goals for your class, you will probably have many objectives. You may have from one to five (or even more) objectives for each main topic that you will address. The stem sentence for writing your objectives is very similar to the one given to help you write your goals. But there is one difference—the addition of the phrase “be able to,” which yields a useful abbreviation in setting objectives: “As a result of being a participating member in my class this semester, students will be able to (SWBAT) ________.”

Whatever you put in the blank must be a measurable activity or ability. A professor of a management course may write: “As a result of being participating members of my class this semester, students will be able to design a business plan for a small business that is suitable for presentation to bank officers.” That professor would be able to measure whether or not individual students have written such a plan (or were making progress toward writing it). Knowing that this is one of the objectives of the course, the professor would continue the course plan accordingly. This is the “strategic” aspect of planning.

Before you begin to formulate your objectives, think about the levels of learning that you will expect of your students. The most widely accepted system of learning objectives was formulated by Benjamin Bloom (1956) and his colleagues at the University of Chicago. Their “taxonomy of educational objectives for the cognitive domain” (more popularly, “Bloom’s taxonomy”) delineates six levels of cognitive complexity, ranging from the knowledge level (lowest) to the evaluation level. Figure 4.1 depicts the taxonomy and some common behavioral words for each level. Take a few minutes to write some objectives for the course on which you are focusing, using SWBAT, followed by a behavior that is measurable.

1. SWBAT
2. SWBAT
3. SWBAT

8. Schedule

At this point in your course planning, it is helpful to at least think about what you will do on a week-to-week basis, even if you do not yet know how often or at what times your class will meet. It might be useful to take some individual pieces of paper and number them according to the number of weeks in your term, or to create the same number of pages in your electronic file.

Review your course objectives and begin to think about their logical sequence. That is, what should be taught first, second, third, and so on, and why? The objectives may display a discernible pattern that allows you to identify the
Evaluation
assess
defend
evaluate
predict
recommend
support

Synthesis
compose
create
design
formulate
plan

Analysis
analyze
appraise
categorize
compare
contrast
differentiate

Application
apply
demonstrate
illustrate
sketch
solve
use

Comprehension
arrange
classify
discuss
explain
interpret
sort

Knowledge
define
describe
identify
list
name
recall

Usage Guidelines:
1. Assess; then start where the learner is.
2. Set achievable learning objectives.
3. Move learning upward systematically.
4. Evaluate students at a level no higher than that at which instruction is delivered.

FIGURE 4.1 Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Objectives

topic you want to address in each particular class period. To be most strategic, you should write in the objectives on the pages you numbered for each week. Keep these pages handy because you will need them as you work through upcoming portions of this chapter.
9. Textbooks, Course Packs, and Other Resources

Consider dedicating a shelf, file drawer, or storage crate to resources for each course (e.g., texts, journal articles, notes for ideas, handbooks, software). As you proceed with your detailed course planning and your individual class sessions, you can use this resource collection to finalize your planning. It also makes sense to set up a file in your computer for pertinent materials and Web addresses that you have identified for potential use.

Many colleges or universities expect professors to choose, or adopt, textbooks for their own particular sections of a course, while other institutions embrace a universal adoption for all sections of the same course. If your department has already chosen a book (with or without your input), then get that book out now and skip ahead to step 10, Possible Assignments and Activities. If you must make a decision about what textbook to use, the following can help:

1. Contact several textbook representatives, tell them the topic of the course for which you need to select a book, and request that examination copies be sent.

2. Once the review copies have arrived, determine whether the books are in their first edition or a subsequent edition, and whether this makes a difference for your course. Sometimes a new book will be the most fresh and appropriate one for your course but might contain some unresolved glitches; other times, a tried-and-true book will be the superior one for your purposes. Either way, in most cases, only the most current books should be considered.

3. Begin looking at the various books’ tables of contents. How well do the topics seem to match up with what you plan to be teaching? The order does not have to be the same, but there should be a reasonable correspondence between your topics and the topics in the book.

4. Next, choose one or two particularly difficult concepts that you teach and find the explanations of those concepts in the textbooks you are still considering. Keep going through this process until you are satisfied that the book you are choosing does an excellent job of elucidating key concepts for your students.

5. Appraise all aspects of the book from a student’s point of view. Remember that you are choosing the book for student use.

Once you have reached a decision, work through the following ideas:

1. Review the textbook as thoroughly as possible. Decide which chapters or sections you want to use. If you ask students to purchase a particular textbook, plan to use a significant portion of it. In this day of textbooks that cost a hundred dollars or more, students expect to get their money’s worth from their purchases. If they buy a book and then find that the professor is using only a small portion of it, they rightfully feel cheated. Also, students will expect to have specific
assignments related to their reading; telling students to "just read along in the
text for background" will signal to them that reading the book is not vital. You
should present the book and clarify your expectations regarding the reading at
your first class meeting. This step is more thoroughly addressed in Chapter 5.

2. After deciding which parts of the book to use, begin to match each reading
selection with a particular week. Decide whether you want students to have
read the material beforehand or whether you want them to wait until you have
introduced the material in class first. Begin adding this information to your syllabus.

3. Formulate a strategy for how students will be held accountable for the read-
ing. We will offer myriad possibilities in Chapters 7 and 8, but at this juncture
start to think about whether a chapter lends itself well to a quiz, to a structured
discussion, to a linked activity, and so on.

In recent years, many professors have created "course packs," or collections
of instructor-developed materials and/or articles from journals and other sources
that are more current or more detailed than the typical textbook. Creating a course
pack involves making selections and securing permission to reproduce the items
for students. To save time, you may use the services of a company that special-
izes in securing permissions, preparing documents, and printing and binding course
packs. While course packs might be more expensive or narrower in scope than
textbooks, they have potential benefits as well. Whether you have an extensive
course pack of readings and learning activities for your students or not, it is highly
likely you will want to use some supplementary materials. Begin developing a file
of these materials.

In the section of your syllabus labeled "Readings," be sure to give all the
information that students might need to locate and purchase materials. If you
reserve readings in the library, include critical information about the policies and
procedures of the library reading room. When you assign additional readings,
provide students with a brief rationale (e.g., currency of information, special help
with a difficult topic) for their selection.

10. Possible Assignments and Activities

Once you have identified your course goals and objectives, you can begin to design
assignments and activities. One way we have found to do strategic course plan-
ing is to write down different ideas for assignments on separate Post-it notes
and attach these to the numbered pages we have set up or to appropriate pages
in the textbook. This allows for easy rearrangement of the ideas. You may also
just type your ideas into the computer in a list, but actual or electronic Post-it
notes are even easier to move around than text is. Whatever medium you choose,
be sure to look back occasionally at your course goals and objectives.

Much more information on creating good assignments and classroom activ-
ities and learning experiences will be included in Chapters 7 and 8. For now,
label a portion of your syllabus "Assignments" and be ready to come back to it
after finishing more of this book (remember, the strategic planning process is recursive).

11. Assessments

Having written your objectives in measurable terms, you should design your assessments to match. The saying “What gets measured gets done” applies to crafting a course. Students assume that a concept that goes unmeasured must not be very important and therefore is not worth learning. If they do spend time learning information and never feel the learning is assessed, they will likely complain about this on the end-of-term instructor evaluations. It is not enough for you to say, “Well, someday you’ll be glad you learned this, but I’m not going to assess it now.” In the consumer-oriented environment in which we live, both real and perceived values count.

If you are new to teaching the course, you may want to ask colleagues to show you course examinations or other materials they have used with success. Most professors work well from models, and reinventing the wheel is inefficient. Besides saving you time, seeing your colleagues’ assessment materials will also enable you to better gauge the level of your evaluation practices. Some people will be quite willing to share when asked, and will feel complimented by your request. Others, of course, may be more protective of what they have created, so respect their right to say no. Be sure to say thanks to those who help you, and to indicate your willingness to reciprocate. Chapters 10 and 11 provide numerous additional pointers on assessment practices.

12. Speakers/Guest Lecturers

If through the SWOT analysis you performed in Chapter 2, or some other means, you become aware of a weakness you have with regard to your course, you might consider having colleagues, community members, or students contribute their expertise. List their names and how you see them contributing (e.g., speaker for an hour, panel discussant, small group facilitator). In reaching your decision, consider whether the potential speaker will contribute meaningfully to the achievement of course goals and objectives; if a speaker just fills time, students will rightly perceive that time as a waste.

Invite your chosen speakers early so that they have enough time to respond. Once a particular speaker has accepted your invitation, add the name, date, and topic to the syllabus. Having several guest speakers during a term adds value to your course in students’ eyes. See Chapter 7 for additional details on managing a class presentation by a guest speaker.

13. Classroom Learning Experiences

As you look over your goals and objectives, think about what learning experiences you want to offer your students. Are there potentially pertinent field trips?
What experiments or role-playing activities would enrich students’ understanding of critical concepts? What videos or interactive Web sites would enliven their learning experience? How about small-group activities? Are student presentations appropriate for achieving synthesis and evaluation objectives? Many ideas for this section will be presented in Chapters 7 and 8; for now, just list ideas that come to you as you peruse your goals and objectives. You may also consider learning experiences that your professors employed when you were a student, as well as ideas that you have learned about at conferences or workshops.

14. Description of Yourself as a Teacher

When you were in college, you and your classmates probably exchanged information about professors as you tried to decide which courses to take. We think you would agree that expending energy on the class content is more profitable to students than using it to figure out the professor. So, in your syllabus, provide a short autobiographical statement that provides students some insight into your teaching style, beliefs, biases, and expectations.

Describing yourself also helps to establish your credibility. Emphasize achievements that the particular students in this course are likely to value. You can write the bio in narrative form or in bulleted points. Fill in some details during the first class meeting, and reveal others gradually throughout the term.

15. Communication Channels

Students will need to communicate with you in ways that fit their individual styles and schedules. What communication channels do you prefer? Do you want students to drop by during posted office hours? To call you on your office phone? To leave you voice-mail messages? To send you e-mail? Tell students how to contact you and what kind of response they can expect. Do you get back to students within twenty-four hours of their leaving a voice-mail or an e-mail message? Do you have obligations throughout the day and therefore need your students’ evening phone numbers? Are you more responsive to seeing things in print than you are to hearing them? Generally, if you will tell students what works for you, they will try to comply. E-mail has helped many students feel more connected to their professors in part because it allows them to get questions answered rapidly.

16. Additional Catalog Information

You need to be reasonably familiar with information from your institution’s catalog that may have an impact on the students in your course. Many instructors have found it helpful to include such key information as support for students with disabilities, academic dishonesty policy, procedures for withdrawal from the course or the university, and pass/fail options. While it is not necessary to reprint long portions of the catalog, it is worthwhile to include selected excerpts, with refer-
ences to where students can go for additional information or clarification. Such practices not only provide information but also encourage students to become more aware of resources that enable them to become more self-directed.

17. Attendance Requirements

You should decide on your classroom attendance policy only after thorough research. Your own policy must be in line with the college and department policies, if any exist, as well as the common practices of the other faculty members. Students receiving scholarships and grants or participating in work-study programs may have attendance requirements that differ from those of other students; therefore, you need to be fully aware of guidelines set forth by your institution’s financial aid department. You also should consider your students’ lifestyles, which might be quite hectic, as well as your own values. The important thing is to set forth your attendance requirements in language that is as specific as possible without completely taking away your flexibility. It is difficult to defend a punitive action against excessive absences if that action is not spelled out succinctly on the course syllabus.

Given our collective experience and the recommendations of faculty from around the country, we recommend that you have attendance policies spelled out as clearly as possible right from the beginning. Consider the answers to these questions: Is attendance required or expected? Do you want excuses or reasons when students are absent? Will those excuses or reasons make any difference to you as far as penalties are concerned? Do you want to be notified when students know ahead of time that they will be absent? If so, how should they notify you? Are students allowed to make up for missed time? If so, how? Do a certain number of absences call for a lowered grade? What is your philosophy about late arrivals? Should students who are late slip in quietly and take a seat in a designated area, or should they go to their regular seat?

The clearer you are on the attendance policy, in your own mind and on your syllabus, the more smoothly your class will operate. Answer as many questions as possible at the beginning of the term so that you minimize challenges later on. Make it a point to refer students to carefully crafted passages in the syllabus if they ask you to clarify key policies.

18. Grading Policies and Procedures

Another area in which to be crystal clear is that of grading policies and procedures. After determining your unit’s policies (if there are any) and talking with colleagues about the grading culture in the department, you can begin to specify your own policy. First, what will the grading scale be? Is there any flexibility? Are you using plus/minus or straight letter grading? Is your system based on points? If so, how do students earn those points? Do you accept late work and, if so, is there a penalty for lateness? Are there makeup exams? Will you offer extra
credit? If students are not content with the grade they have earned, what is their recourse? What are the policies for students’ getting an “incomplete” or withdrawing the class? How do you initiate expelling a student from your class, and what are the cultural issues related to doing so?

It may seem like a lot to investigate and consider, but the first time a sticky situation arises, you will be glad you invested the effort in advance to find out how to handle it. Although students may not agree with the rules, they derive a certain amount of security from thoroughly understanding them. Grading policies that are either unclear or inconsistently applied leave you open to extensive grade appeals (a time-consuming, disagreeable process), angry feelings, unpleasant reports by students, and sleepless nights for you, as you try to figure out what you should do. Over time poor grading policies also influence your student recruitment potential. You can always modify strict rules by granting leniency, but you cannot easily put a structure into place after the term has begun.

The components discussed above will make up the bulk of your syllabus, but there are several additions you may want to consider, in order to have the most complete syllabus possible. Providing students a complete syllabus is a start for helping them be successful—if they decide to take advantage of what you are offering. Your careful planning can provide them with some confidence and motivation to do just that.

Additional Syllabus Considerations

As you finalize your strategic planning, keep in mind that your syllabus should provide the increasingly overextended students who will populate your class with a complete and detailed course overview and agenda. Remember as well that you are preparing not only to deliver a single course but also to play a role in the future learning of students. As such, one of your goals should be to challenge students to assume greater responsibility for their own learning. A well-developed syllabus contributes to achieving that goal (Grunnert, 1997).

An extended syllabus can contain one or more of the following:

- **Title page for course.** The official version of your syllabus may include a title page that displays the course number and title, a graphic related to the course, your name, a place for the student’s name, the time and location of the course, and any other quick-reference information you consider important. It serves as a welcome page or an entry page into the extended syllabus and the course, so make it attractive and inviting.

- **Table of contents.** With an extended syllabus that includes all the components we have addressed thus far, along with handouts or other support materials, you and your students will want a way to find information quickly. A table of contents allows for this. It takes only a few minutes to create, but it can save you and your students much time throughout the semester. Making the syllabus easy to
navigate will show the students that you are aware of their time constraints and their need for fast retrieval of information. Going the extra mile for students can set you apart from others instructors, improving your student recruiting and retention success.

- **Letter to students.** Consider writing a letter to your students. Introduce yourself (using some of the information you’ve previously generated), the course, your expectations, and so on. This letter may be the very first item in the extended syllabus and can set a friendly tone for the whole course.

- **Resources.** Often there are resources instructors know about or have learned about from previous students that would help new students pursue the goals and objectives of the course. List these for students—and make the point that although these resources are not requirements, you endorse them.

- **Course calendar.** In student focus groups recently conducted by one of the authors of this book, students made it clear that one component they want in their syllabus is a distilled version of the calendar—with dates, due dates, readings, and so on. It is not that students do not want the extended versions, too, but sometimes they need a quick reference page they can keep in their planners or grab when they are running to the library.

- **How to study for this course.** One of the best ways to compile this section is to have students who have successfully completed your course write some suggestions for how to do well in it. Not only do they reveal ideas and clues that you would not think of, but they write in such a way that it is “heard” by the current students. The suggestions sound real because they are real. Obviously, if you are a first-time instructor, you will have to write this section yourself. But you can let students know in the syllabus that you will be asking for their input at the end of the course.

- **Teaching methods.** Students with a consumer mentality want and deserve a clear idea of the instructional methods you intend to employ, especially if those methods are likely to be perceived as somewhat unusual. Listing your methods also serves as a good protection should a student later lodge a complaint about your teaching with the administration.

- **Time estimates.** While it is impossible to tell students exactly how many hours they will be spending on your class (through attendance, homework, group projects, and other commitments related to course content), it is possible to give them an estimate. Students need to know up-front if a particular course’s time requirements are going to exceed the time they have allotted. This information can help them in their planning; they can choose to take the class another semester or they can clear out adequate time in their schedule. If the class requires less time than they had expected, they can take an additional class or increase their commitments in other areas. Consider your own best estimates, but also use student comments from previous semesters to give a sense of student perspective.
**Student organizations.** As Richard Light (2001) reports, student organizations often make a tremendous impact on the quality of the collegiate experience as perceived by students. For at least four reasons, you should identify and provide essential information (e.g., places, times, membership dues) for curricular organizations available to your students. First, they may not receive this information otherwise. Second, it shows that you value students’ decisions about their discretionary time. Third, membership in extracurricular organizations promotes the development of students’ social and leadership skills, which in turn contributes to academic success. Finally, student participation in such organizations fosters retention in degree programs and the institution as a whole.

Since your major goal is to facilitate your students’ mastery of the course content, your syllabus should eliminate barriers to learning by anticipating reasonable questions. Be aware, however, that in recent years the syllabus has become more than a course plan. In our consumer-oriented and litigious society, it has evolved into a “binding contract” between the instructor and the student, with all the implications typically associated with that term. A well-developed syllabus that clearly outlines your expectations in all of the critical areas of the course can protect you if ever you are challenged.

Our society also emphasizes visual stimulation, so be mindful of how your syllabus looks. Typographical mistakes, poor-quality photocopies, and the like communicate to students that you lack professionalism—not an image you want to create during the first class meeting when the syllabus is distributed.

For the reasons given above, you should have your syllabus thoroughly reviewed, by colleagues or students, prior to having it printed for distribution. Other pairs of eyes can catch errors, inconsistencies, or problems with clarity.

Appendix 4.1 presents a model syllabus. It is not intended to supplant any guidelines that your colleagues might have provided or to address all aspects of every teaching assignment. It does, however, show you a grounded syllabus that may prompt you to consider critical points you may have overlooked. The model syllabus is general to consumer-oriented students. Reviewing it can help you save time and energy you might invest in other aspects of planning your course.

**Planning Your Course Strategy**

Many professors, particularly new ones, seem to view themselves and the textbook as the sole vehicles for delivering the material of the course. Accountable professors, in contrast, understand that they are facilitators of instruction; they must first discern how students process information and then use a range of appropriate instructional methods that allow for students to learn material in ways that are most efficient and effective for them. These professors also assess student learning regularly to ensure mastery of key material before progressing and to gen-
erate information to continually improve the quality of the learning experience, a strategy that Chapter 13 discusses in detail.

Because your students have probably been highly conditioned by a steady diet of electronic media, it is important to design stimulating elements into your class. Guest speakers, field trips, Web-enhanced instruction, and videotapes are each potentially powerful vehicles for your course. Begin early to accumulate resources, through your professional and community contacts, that lend credibility and panache to your course, and offer the opportunity for students to develop real-world insights that textbooks and other traditionally employed materials cannot provide. As you plan, however, remember to allow enough lead time to arrange experiential elements.

A course with a sound plan, communicated in an attractive syllabus, and enriched with special learning opportunities will have a marked impact on your students. Share your plan enthusiastically at your initial class meeting. Refer back to it throughout the course to provide students with enough structure to help them meet their goals in your course—and beyond.

Summary of Key Points

- Talk with other professors who have successfully taught sections of the course to which you are assigned.
- Develop a sound syllabus to serve as a blueprint for students, guiding them to success in your course.
- Plan your overall teaching strategy well in advance, drawing on resources beyond the classroom when possible.
- Plan guest speakers and field trips well in advance, and implement plans only after thoroughly assessing all of the inherent risks.
- Get organized from the beginning.

Through the Professors’ Eyes

PAT: I’ve written course syllabi for years. Each year I find I get more and more specific with my explanations and expectations. We have changed our grading scale at the university this year to include pluses and minuses, so I need to rethink how to weigh my assignments. I keep trying to engage my students in higher-order thinking and perhaps need to reexamine assignments to ensure that I am accomplishing that goal. I am forever tweaking my syllabi to make them clearer, and I can’t imagine why some of my colleagues never change their syllabi, except for test dates and assignment due dates. I have never been able to do that. I have recently found much material on the Web that my students can reference, so I’m developing a whole new online course packet for
them. I know the students will like this, especially since they can download it at no charge. Textbooks and materials are getting so expensive that I feel guilty asking my students to buy more than one textbook.

**DALE:** I don’t understand all this fuss about giving students treatises for syllabi. All they need to know is what their reading assignments are and the deadline for completing them. They need dates for tests and the final course project, and my grading scale. I give all directions in class. If they miss a class, it’s their responsibility to find out how to do the assignments. I see no need to coddle the students—they are legally adults. One of my friends from graduate school still doesn’t give his students a syllabus at all, saying it impinges on his academic freedom. He likes to enter the classroom, gauge the collective mindset of the students, and wing it. In spite of my strong appreciation for intellectual independence, I realize that approach invites a plethora of problems. Not completely a traditionalist, I have been thinking about creating a course home page, on the Web; this could eliminate unnecessary phone calls and e-mail messages from students and free up some additional time for my research.

**KIM:** I decided to base my first syllabi on those I obtained from another professor who has taught my classes for a long time. I think the first time it would be unwise not to take advantage of guidance that is offered by those who have taught so long. I will make a few adjustments to the assignments because of things I have heard from others. I would like to create more interactive work, but the syllabus from my colleague looks very good. I plan to set up a Web page that gives information about my background and also anticipates questions students may have. I have talked to my department chair about grading practices. I am used to grades being given only on tests, but I know other activities should be included in order to determine a final grade for the students. I am not sure how to weight tests, quizzes, and activities or how to write measurable objectives for all that I would like my students to learn. The department chair asked a second-year faculty member in our department to help me with this. Once I get the objectives done, maybe the assessment will make more sense to me. I met Dr. Zhang for lunch several days ago, and I liked him very much. He has taught for over twenty years in the same college where I am teaching, but in a different department. He said he would agree to be my mentor under five conditions. First, everything we say to each other would be kept completely confidential by both of us. Second, that I would agree to mentor a doctoral student, who is a graduate teaching assistant in his department, having recently arrived here from his country. Third, that all of our discussions be conducted in English, even though we speak some of each other’s language. Fourth, that I would meet one of his classes while he is out of town in a few weeks. And last, that either one of us could end the relationship, without having to give a reason, at any time. I have thought very hard about these conditions and believe they are reasonable for what I will be receiving in return. I will call him tonight to accept his offer and schedule our next meeting.
Tips for Thriving

Regardless of profession, people in our society are becoming increasingly marketing-conscious. Instructors who seek to thrive in the classroom must contemplate the type of image they wish to establish in the minds of their students. By using the word image, we are not suggesting that you attempt to present a false persona but rather are encouraging you to focus on the qualities you truly possess in order to make your classroom efforts more effective, and thus achieve a greater sense of personal fulfillment.

Recall from the chapter our suggestion to give special emphasis to the visual quality of your syllabus. With today’s desktop publishing software, you can incorporate graphics and other design elements with a minimum investment of resources. Such use of technology is likely to create a perception among students that you are contemporary in a wide variety of ways.

In addition, you might want to consider color-coding your materials. For example, if you were to teach two separate sections of the same course, you might want to have the materials for one section printed on blue paper and those of the other section printed on yellow paper. Should you make minor modifications in materials (e.g., different versions of essentially the same examination), your color-coding will enable you to keep materials well organized.

SUGGESTED READINGS

APPENDIX 4.1

Model Course Syllabus

Principles of Management
MAN 2021 A1
Fall 20—

Class
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:25–10:40 a.m.
Springfield Campus, Blair Building, room 111

Textbook
Management, 9th edition, by Burns and Schreiber, available at campus bookstore

Related Courses
Students would benefit from a prior knowledge of basic business terminology, gained through work experience or completion of an introductory course.

Instructor
Dr. Angel Torez, Professor of Business Management, received his B.S. in business administration and M.A. in marketing from Western Kentucky University, and a doctorate in business from the University of North Texas. Before entering teaching, he managed in the hospitality industry and in several sales organizations. He has been at the college since 1987, as instructor and department chair. His book Managing the Diverse Workplace is one of the nation’s top sellers among titles focused on that workplace issue.

Office
Dr. Torez will be available to talk with students immediately following each class meeting. At other times, he can be seen in N 226 during hours posted on that office door. From Madison County, he can be reached by telephone at 462-4700, or at 930-4722 from Monroe River or Jefferson Counties. His e-mail address is atorez@mail.amc.edu.

Learning Methods
A variety of instructional methods are used to provide students with effective learning opportunities. These include role-play, group problem solving, and self-analysis activities, in addition to more traditional methods.

Learning Objectives
Upon successful completion of this course, each student will be able to:
1. Explain the basic management functions, skills, and roles.
2. Discuss management's role in enhancing efficiency and effectiveness.
3. Discuss the factors influencing changes in the manager's role.
4. Make ethical decisions that satisfy diverse organizational stakeholders.
5. Summarize the basic concepts of strategic planning.
6. Explain operating plans, policies, and procedures.
7. Explain the process for making effective management decisions.
8. Describe the function of commonly used decision-making tools.
9. Compare and contrast types of departmentalization.
10. Describe the dimensions and consequences of organizational culture.
11. Summarize the process of employee recruitment, selection, placement compensation, and evaluation.
12. Contrast common leadership styles.
13. Explain the manager's role in managing conflict and encouraging teamwork.
14. Explain the most popular theories of worker motivation.
15. Explain effective methods of overcoming communication barriers.
16. Summarize the methods of controlling.
17. Explain the principles of total quality management.

**Attendance Policy**

Although Dr. Torez is providing opportunities for each student's mastery of course objectives, students should realize the value that their experiences offer their peers. Therefore, it is critical that you attend class regularly to be a partner in this enhanced learning environment. Roll will be taken at each class meeting, and your participation will be taken into consideration in case of a borderline final grade. If class will be missed, it is each student's responsibility to personally contact the instructor in advance, regarding missed assignments. The instructor will not accept late work without valid reasons. Students are encouraged to contact the instructor anytime they are not achieving their intended level of success, prior to taking any other action. Students who need to withdraw must complete an official form, and submit it consistent with college policy, no later than November 9. “Incomplete” grades are awarded only when an emergency prevents a student from completing a minor portion of the course assignments.

**Grading Criteria**

3 unit exams @ 20% (45 multiple-choice questions, one essay)
= 60%
Research project (detailed standards provided at Sept. 17 class)
= 20%
Final exam (comprehensive, 100 multiple-choice questions) = 20%
Grading Scale

90–100%  A
80–89%  B
70–79%  C
60–69%  D
Below 60%  F

Methods of Achieving Success

Achieving success in MAN 2021 will require a time commitment outside of class that averages three hours per week. Students benefit from completing assigned reading prior to that content being addressed in class and from actively participating in classroom discussion, activities, and review.

Delta Epsilon Chi

Students enrolled in management and marketing courses benefit from participating in the college chapter of the national student organization Delta Epsilon Chi. This chapter has a rich history of success in state and national competitions, as well as service to our local communities.

Certificates & Degrees

Today's workplace values many certifications and licenses as "tickets to upward mobility." This course is required within the A.S. and B.S. degrees in business administration, marketing management, accounting technology, and office support technology.

Professional Standards

An atmosphere similar to that present in the most professional businesses should be displayed at all times. Thus, distractions such as personal communications devices and door slamming should be minimized, and consideration demonstrated to diverse opinions.

Principles of Management
MAN 2021 A1
Tentative Schedule

Week of:  Topics/activities/assignments
August 20  Introduction, review of syllabus. Building a learning community.
August 27  Chapters 1 and 2.
September 3  Chapters 3 and 4.
September 10  Chapter 5. Review for exam.
September 17  Exam No. 1. Return/review exam. Research project overview.
September 24  Chapters 6 and 7.
October 1  Chapters 8 and 10. Project Proposal Due.
October 8  Chapter 11. Review for exam.
October 15  Exam No. 2. Return/review exam. Chapter 12.
October 22  Chapters 13 and 14.
October 29  Chapter 15.
November 5  Chapter 16.
November 12  Exam No. 3. Return/review exam.
November 19  Chapter 19.
November 26  Chapter 20.
December 3   Projects due. Presentations.
December 17  Final Exam: Tuesday, December 18, 8 a.m.
CHAPTER 6
Managing the Context of Your Course

FOCUS QUESTIONS

- How do you get effectively organized and remain so throughout your course?
- How should you organize a class session to ensure efficiency and effectiveness?
- How can you manage communications and challenging situations with students?
- What are the critical professional practices for you to display consistently?

*We never educate directly, but indirectly by means of the environment. Whether we permit chance environments to do the work, or whether we design environments for the purpose makes a great difference.*

—John Dewey

"Mom," frustratingly cried the new freshman, phoning home from the dorm hundreds of miles away, "three of my five classes have over four hundred students. We're afraid to raise our hands, even when we're totally lost. One professor jumped all over a guy yesterday for asking an 'ill-conceived' question. The students who get there late sit in the aisles or stand in the back of the room. There's always chatter going on around me—people trying to figure out where the professor is in the textbook—so I can't hear half of what he's saying up front. And after class, the professors walk right out of the room—like totally unapproachable."

At the beginning of each new academic year, thousands of students on hundreds of campuses no doubt make such phone calls home. The same kind of frustration that causes them to drop classes and change majors has made parents angry
and caused them to question rising tuition costs. It has also fueled the accountability movement. While some factors are beyond the control of professors, others are clearly within their spheres of influence. This chapter is dedicated to helping you develop strategies for effectively managing the context of your courses.

Once you have launched your course successfully, your next challenge is to maintain the momentum you have worked so hard to establish. As a student, you probably worked with well-organized professors as well as with absentminded types who had to scramble to locate a copy of a handout or syllabus from among a pile of unsorted papers. Even if such experiences were decades ago, you can very likely describe the frustration you felt when your reasonable requests were not met. The expectations of today’s students are every bit as high, if not higher, than yours were then.

If your course planning was thorough and the first class meeting went well, then getting fully organized for the remainder of the course will be relatively easy—if you attend to it immediately. Waiting until the first student assignments are submitted or your first examination is administered will make getting organized far more challenging and time-consuming. Heed the often-repeated admonition of effective managers from varied fields: “Plan your work, then work your plan, and most problems will be minimized.”

Organizing Your Course Materials

Organizing your course materials is critical to achieving optimal student learning. Through their decades of teaching, the authors of this book have exchanged information with scores of professors whose organizational strategies can be plotted along a broad continuum, from zero to exemplary. We will highlight three of the most effective strategies we have found and, realizing that courses and students vary, leave it to you to identify variations that best meet your needs.

1. One systematic way to organize course materials is to insert all critical documents into a large binder, using tabbed dividers or simply a blank sheet of colored paper between sections. You would include several copies of the course syllabus, as well as the official class roll and the completed, alphabetized student profiles. Insert, as they are developed, the lesson plans for each class session, any pertinent notes, and extra copies of materials you hand out to students. Students inevitably will lose materials or ask for those distributed when they were absent. Having these materials immediately available reinforces your peace of mind and displays your concern for your students’ success.

   Another section of your course binder should be designated for copies of your examinations, quizzes, answer keys, and study guides, to which you may refer during class when checking for thoroughness, as well as when reviewing for the exam. Include as well all project assignment handouts, with their respective grad-
ing rubrics, which you will want handy when your students ask specific questions about examinations, projects, and grading.

2. An organizational strategy that many mobile faculty members employ is to file all course materials into a single briefcase, plastic file cabinet, storage crate, or expandable cardboard file. Any of these is likely not to exceed ten pounds and can be transported—using a small wheeled carrier, if necessary—to the professor’s office, classroom, automobile, or home office with great convenience. The storage unit might contain file folders or large manila envelopes that hold exams, handouts, extra copies of the syllabus, and so on. This method also provides a place for you to store a copy of the textbook, assignments collected from students, and videos or other instructional materials to be used during class. Professors who employ this strategy report that—even when picking up a ringing telephone on the way out of their offices—they feel secure knowing that all of their materials for each course are in one convenient, reliable place.

3. A growing number of professors are setting up Web pages on which they post the syllabus, assignment directions, handouts, and so on for each of their classes. Students can view the materials in the privacy of their living quarters and print hard copies as needed. This strategy, which will be further highlighted in Chapter 9, not only provides students with around-the-clock access to critical documents but also reduces the amount of paper that the professor needs to transport to each class meeting.

In each of the strategies described above, the key factor is being well organized. If you handle the course materials properly, your students will perceive you as a professional and caring teacher. The systematic, consistent use of an organization strategy will also free your mind to manage other aspects of your teaching more effectively, including the important one of interpersonal communications.

In Chapter 4 we emphasized the development of a sound syllabus, and in Chapter 5 we discussed the importance of the initial class meeting on student retention. As you move deeper into the term, revisit your syllabus in class to provide focus, direction, and guidance in your decision making. Abrupt changes, especially those perceived by students as inconsistent with the foundation you have already built, engender confusion and frustration. Although you will no doubt recognize changes you would like to make in the delivery of the materials, the nature of the assignments, the content of the exams, and so on throughout the term, note those changes without making dramatic deviations from the syllabus of the course you are presently teaching.

Lesson Planning

Lesson planning is another important organization function. Although establishing an agenda may keep your class flowing from activity to activity, what you plan
to accomplish in those time segments must be clear in your mind and must facilitate the achievement of the overall goals and objectives of your course. The degree of detail in your lesson plans is directly related to your teaching style, experience with the material being taught, and comfort level in the classroom. Strategic lesson planning focuses on four elements: establishing objectives, planning learning experiences, identifying required materials, and evaluating student progress. Each of these is discussed below.

1. Establishing Objectives

In Chapter 4, we provided an overview of Bloom’s taxonomy of cognitive objectives—the most widely recognized system for guiding the development of learning outcomes. You might recall from Figure 4.1 that with each of the six levels, we listed common verbs used to describe student behaviors consistent with that level. During your preterm planning, you developed the broad areas of student performance. Prior to each class meeting, your task is to identify the specific expectations of student performance to be attained by the end of the lesson. Writing your objectives with respect to Bloom’s levels will help you identify effective classroom activities and an evaluation process that measures student success.

2. Planning Learning Experiences

Focusing as best you can on your students’ existing knowledge levels, their learning styles, their overall maturity, and related factors, the next task is to identify activities and teaching methods to match the objectives you clarified above. Chapters 7, 8, and 9 will help you make better decisions related to learning experiences, but it is critical here to answer some foundational questions: What content do you need to present, and what is its appropriate level of complexity for this course? Does it lend itself to using an overhead projector, a PowerPoint presentation, or some other form of visual device to focus students’ attention? How do you intend to keep the students engaged in your lecture? Would it be desirable to have students immediately apply their knowledge in a group activity? If so, how will you structure that activity? What is the ideal size of groups for this activity, and how will you select members? What directions do you need to provide so that students can be successful in their group work? How will they share their group findings? What key points do you need to make in debriefing the activity? Do you plan to engage students in discussion? If so, what are the key questions you want to ask? What cognitive level of learning should they reach?

Bloom’s taxonomy can be used to formulate questions, just as it can to clarify objectives. Professors typically aim at the higher-order cognitive functions, so plan to evaluate at that level. You should be mindful of the concerns of such education stakeholders as employers, professional groups, and legislators—who complain that college graduates have trouble with higher-order think-
ing—and ensure that students’ higher-order thinking skills are developed to the fullest extent.

3. Identifying Required Materials

When planning your in-class learning experiences, make a list of the specific materials you will need. Are you planning to show a video? Do you have the video close by, or must you retrieve it from someplace else? Do you need to reserve it ahead of time? Is a VCR always available in your classroom, or do you need to order it? If you are planning group work, do you have all the materials you need to share with the students? Make a list of resources you need for each lesson in advance. We have found it worthwhile always to have a tool kit of materials: whiteboard markers, Post-it notes, name tags, a three-hole punch, index cards, scissors, and so on. You may or may not need all in any given class period, but it promotes a sense of security to have them already packed, just in case.

4. Evaluating Student Progress

How are you going to know if the students accomplished the objectives of the lesson? Your evaluation strategies should not only be appropriate for the objectives of the lesson but contribute to the overall evaluation process for the course. If your evaluation strategy indicates that students did not achieve the objectives of the lesson, you can review the material or try a new approach the next time the class meets. It is far better to reteach missed concepts than to continue to plow ahead without the comprehension of the students. An important adage for many professors to remember is “Less is more.” Rather than “cover” the material, we should be more concerned with students “learning” the material.

After each class, note what worked and what did not work. Such reflection will allow you to make adjustments in your plans for the next class meeting and will give you a head start when you rethink your class for another term. Reflecting on your practice can also help you focus on problems with clarity, potential examination questions, and alternative sources of materials. Although we do not advocate that you “teach the test,” we do believe that what you teach and what you assess must be correlated. Too often students complain that a test did not measure what they studied. If this is a legitimate complaint, it can be traced back to the professor’s not planning the instruction and assessment concurrently.

Inevitably, students will ask you, “Is this on the test?” That question may annoy you, but you should be able to answer it honestly. Answers such as “This specific problem won’t be on the test, but I will expect you to be able to demonstrate the process used to solve the problem” or “I will not ask you to write out definitions of these terms but rather to use the terms appropriately in your explanation of related phenomena” convey to the students what is important (concepts and process) and what is not important (specific facts).
Developing an Agenda

To ensure that each class meeting is managed efficiently and effectively, it is critical to have an agenda that divides your scheduled time into segments. Such organizing will assist you in pacing the class. Some professors like to write the time allotments on the chalkboard to provide structure for those needing it and to encourage the students to stay on task as well. A typical agenda may look like the following:

1. Reflections on last class meeting (10 minutes)
2. Review of homework assignment (10–15 minutes)
3. Overview of new material (10 minutes)
4. Lecture on new content (20 minutes)
5. Break (10 minutes)
6. Group activity over new content (25 minutes)
7. Group debriefing (15–20 minutes)
8. Explanation of assignments (10 minutes)

Note that the above agenda reinforces mastery of material addressed in the previous session and does not address new content until twenty or twenty-five minutes into the class meeting. Students are not required to be "on" the minute they step into the classroom, allowing some time to transition from their previous class, their workday, and other challenges. In addition, students whose schedules or last-minute conflicts might have delayed their arrival would not be severely penalized by this schedule. Coverage of the most critical content is focused in the core period of the session, when students are most likely to experience optimal mental engagement.

While strategic agenda preparation requires that you spend some time with your course plan to identify activities that foster the achievement of course objectives for a particular group of students, it will enable you to experience the sense of self-satisfaction all teachers need. The personal security that an agenda provides also enables you to focus on fostering a personalized relationship with your students.

Managing Your Class Time

Establishing an agenda and a good lesson plan for each meeting should enable you to keep your class on target. However, unpredictable events sometimes affect even the best planning. To minimize their impact, and to provide you with the optimum amount of time to address your objectives, you would be wise to adhere to the following guidelines:

- Begin each class precisely on time. When students know that their tardiness will not affect your class management, they will typically extend themselves to
arrive on time. On occasion (e.g., when there is severe weather), you might decide to begin slowly by reviewing previously taught material or even by talking individually with students regarding their progress, but start on time nonetheless.

- **Adhere to your agenda.** Students frequently complain that professors go off on tangents and tell irrelevant stories. Adhering to your agenda and lesson plans, perhaps by writing the plan on the board or sharing it a day in advance via e-mail, should keep you on target. Remember, however, that you have developed your agenda and lesson plans on assumptions about your students’ ability to learn. If they are exhibiting comprehension difficulties, you should adjust your agenda and lesson plan and regroup, rethink, and perhaps reteach on the spot.

- **Schedule breaks.** In a class lasting longer than one hour, schedule a ten-minute break midway through the session. For classes of three or more hours, schedule two breaks of ten minutes each or a midway break of fifteen or twenty minutes. The starting time of the class and its proximity to typical mealtimes, the walking distance to various facilities, and so on should be factored into such decisions. (It might be wise to assess your students’ preferences on this decision at your first class meeting, thereby fostering the perception that this is their class.) Announce and write on the board what time students should return from a break, and start your class on time afterward. Otherwise, students are likely to get caught up in conversations or activities that prolong your starting time, affect instructional effectiveness, frustrate highly focused students, and foster ill will. You might also want to double-check attendance after the break. If students use the break as an excuse to skip out early, address the situation proactively at the following class meeting by explaining its impact on your management of the class and requesting that anyone who must leave early tell you so at the start of the break.

- **In discussions, shut off nonproductive talk.** Whether with the whole class or in small groups, discussions must be targeted to your learning objectives. When a student makes a tangential comment, you can confirm the interesting nature of the point and then redirect discussion to the central issue. When students are working in small groups, circulate among them actively, especially at the beginning, to ensure that everyone fully understands the goals of the activity and remains on task to accomplish them. Chapter 8 presents more details on using small classroom groups effectively.

- **Whenever possible, relate course content to everyday events.** Integrate the news from the international, national, and local scenes, as well as from pop culture and sports into your content if you can. Add relevant cartoons or quotations to your presentations. Find props to enhance your students’ engagement. Pay attention to your voice projection, volume, enunciations, and variety—for example, when properly employed, dramatic elongated pauses can engender student reflection. Use gestures to emphasize important ideas and concepts, and move throughout the room to nudge the disengaged into the dialogue. Communication theory tells us that nonverbal cues are stronger than verbal cues, so be sure that your nonverbal gestures do not detract from or negate what you say. Most important, plan
to make your class relevant to the specific group of students enrolled and exercise a bit of levity. Even if you are "humor-challenged," you can probably apply your points by telling a story to which your students are likely to relate. The idea is to provide students an extra reason to attend when their lives hold so many diversions that they might be tempted not to come to class.

- Use the class time in its entirety. Avoid being swayed by some students' requests to go home early. Usually such requests are made by a few highly vocal but relatively unmotivated students. Your most motivated students silently reject the suggestions from their counterparts to cut classes short. Which students would you want to reward for their behavior—the motivated or the unmotivated?

- End class on time. If you become sidetracked from your agenda, do not expect students to remain after the scheduled ending time of the class to make up the lost time. You will have to use the next session for catch-up. Many of your students have family, work, or other school obligations to meet after class, and making them late discounts your standing in their eyes. Being overly free-flowing does not foster a positive learning environment in your classroom.

- Before dismissing the class, remind students of what they can expect during the next session. If you have a special event planned, such as a guest speaker or a highly controversial video, convey that information enthusiastically to the students, so that they will look forward to returning. Their energy will feed the occasion.

Ineffective professors often mistakenly view the class period as time to fill so that students stay busy. Strategic professors realize that with clearly established learning objectives, well-chosen resources, and strong teaching and learning methods, time management is a relatively easy issue to master.

**Managing Your Classroom Environment**

Managing your class time strategically will prevent or help you overcome most of your challenges. There are, however, several additional practices that will help you to ensure that the environment is conducive to maximum learning, perceived as fair by students, and supportive of your own peace of mind. Depending on the characteristics of your students and your own comfort level, you might be able to allow students to contribute to one or more of these practices.

First, develop a workable system for taking roll. Most student financial aid programs require participants to attend class regularly, so record keeping is a must. You might want to circulate a roll sheet, reminding students that they are responsible for neatly entering their names. As mentioned earlier, seating charts can help you check attendance at the start of each class meeting. Whatever method you choose, follow it systematically and explain it orally and on your syllabus so that each student fully understands your policy.
Next, plan somehow for the arrival of latecomers. Locking the door behind you as you enter the classroom is no longer considered a defendable option at most institutions. A viable possibility, however, is to designate specific seats within the classroom for late arrivers and admonish those who do so to enter quietly and follow the attendance record-keeping protocol you have established. This strategy minimizes distractions and allows you and your students to remain focused on your learning objectives.

Finally, institutions of higher education are increasingly engaging their students in “service learning,” in hopes of their developing a more grounded understanding of their obligations to their communities. As their exemplar, you should model such behavior in the most basic of ways, by demonstrating responsible housekeeping practices in your classroom. No professor or class should have to follow another class into an unkempt classroom. You should accept the responsibility to leave the classroom in at least as good a condition as you found it. Boards should be erased clean, furniture properly arranged, and trash placed in a proper receptacle. Besides modeling responsible behavior for students, you will also maintain the respect of the housekeeping staff. If you are tempted to underappreciate the custodian’s role, imagine having to ask a custodian to unlock your office because you have left your keys on your desk. The custodian whose area of responsibility has been consistently well treated by your students is likely to come to your aid generously.

Improving Interpersonal Communications

As we have emphasized throughout this book, the reality in the highly competitive life of today’s postsecondary institutions is that professors have some obligation not only to motivate students to continue in their pursuit of higher education but also, to some degree, to “sell” their programs such that their reputations serve as effective recruiting tools.

Besides being well prepared for your classes and conducting efficient and interesting lessons, you can develop positive reactions from your students through good interpersonal communications. There are several guidelines you can follow:

- Listen to your students—free of preconceptions. You should spend at least as much time listening as speaking. Students want to communicate; give them the opportunity to do so.
- Perception is important. Choose your words carefully to be respectful of social and cultural differences in your classroom.
- Both praise and criticism of individual student’s work are best given privately. Excessive praise in front of the class can be as devastating to the student as excessive criticism—either can be embarrassing. However, written praise or criticism can be personal and helpful, particularly when the comments are constructive.
Do not argue with your students. Students frequently like to engage in arguments with you or their fellow students and in doing so can push you to the limit. Arguing in front of the class rarely works; although you may win the verbal battle, ultimately you will lose the battle for control. If there is disagreement, encourage the student to stay after class or come to your office to continue the dialogue. Both in class and in private, control your emotions.

An especially effective tool for managing your communications with students (and others) is transactional analysis (Stewart and Joines, 1987). Developed by psychotherapist Eric Berne (1964), this theory recognizes that each of us has developed three ego states that determine the communications patterns we regularly employ. The first ego state is that of “child.” It is a totally emotional state characterized by self-absorption and dependency on others for need satisfaction and is often observed as either pouting or being rebellious. Language is very I centered: “I want,” “give me,” “I expect,” “I need.”

The second ego state is that of “parent.” This is also an emotional state, one characterized by either judgmental or nurturing language, such as: “You made me very proud,” “You make me angry,” “You cannot seem to do anything right,” “You demand a lot of attention,” “You will not graduate if you do not start applying yourself.” Note that the parental ego state uses you language.

The third ego state is that of “adult.” This is an objective, analytical ego state that emphasizes higher-order and critical-thinking language: “Let’s analyze what we have said here and determine where we are,” “We have been very creative in our thinking—let’s examine our thoughts,” “We have been doing a lot of evaluating here—can we look again at our criteria and see if we are applying them equally and fairly?” Language in this state is frequently we language and indicates the equality of the people involved in the transaction.

Only one ego state predominates in an individual at a given time. However, all three might come into play during any single class session given the range of individuals in the class. The effective professor will seek to elevate interaction to adult ego states and to keep the class dialogue objective and collaborative. Enjoying a resurgence of popularity among those in the helping professions, transactional analysis is a practical tool that can help you cope in your classroom with the variety of challenges students will pose.

**Transactional Analysis Exercise**

For each scenario below, identify the ego state from which each of the three statements that follow is generated. Then select the most effective statement for the situation.

1. At the end of the first meeting of a new class, a student asks: “This class really has a lot of work required. Do many students flunk?” The professor responds:
a. "Only the lazy ones who don’t get with it right away."
b. "I do everything I possibly can to make sure everyone passes."
c. "The course material is challenging, but I provide many resources for helping everyone learn it. Nearly all students are successful in this course."

2. During the second class meeting, the professor states a well-developed position on a controversial topic. A student heatedly attacks the professor’s position. The professor responds:
   a. "It’s clear you’ve been brainwashed by one side of this issue."
   b. "Can I see a show of hands of those of you who support that position?"
   c. "You’ve stated a viewpoint that many people believe to be true. One of the most important reasons we attend college is to be exposed to divergent points of view; this exposure helps us make more grounded decisions throughout our lives."

3. Thirty minutes into the third class meeting, a student’s cell phone rings, and he gets up to go into the hall to answer it. The professor says:
   a. "Oh nooooooo!
   b. "I told you not to let that happen! See me after class!"
   c. Nothing at the time, but before dismissing class says, "Now that we’re up and running, I want to remind everyone that our syllabus asks you to keep personal communications devices in the mute position. If you’re in a potential emergency situation of some kind, please let me know before the class starts."

4. During the review of the results of the first exam, a student emotionally states that a certain question was tricky. The professor says:
   a. "Tricky? If you really knew the material, you wouldn’t say that!"
   b. "Really? I used the test bank. You’d think all the questions would be good."
   c. "Hmm. What about that question do you believe is unfair?"

5. At the end of a class during which the professor returned the first scored papers, a struggling student approaches to question her less-than-perfect grade. The professor says:
   a. "You look disappointed. Would you like to talk about the paper?"
   b. "Cheer up, it’s only one grade."
   c. "You made above the class average, a very acceptable grade on the first paper."

Exercise Answers and Discussion

Communications experts say that when messages are mixed, only 7 percent of the meaning is attributable to the words themselves, while 38 percent is attributable to the tone of voice, and 55 percent to the body language used. Thus, in the above exercises, since you have only words on which to base your answers, your choices might vary from ours given below.
Our perception is that in scenario 1, a reaction comes from a judgmental parent, b from a nurturing parent, and c from the adult ego state. Using c prevents the parent from being hooked by the question and fosters an objective communications dynamic as the course gets launched. Note that the parent ego state reacts emotionally, whereas the adult ego state responds objectively.

In scenario 2, response a comes from a judgmental parent, b from the irresponsible child, and c from the adult ego state. As in the first scenario, c is clearly the most effective response.

In scenario 3, response a comes from the child, b from the judgmental parent, and c from the adult ego state. Again, the adult response is the most effective, reminding students of the agreed-on policy while also recognizing that there might be legitimate reasons to have a personal communications device. If the professor controls his or her tone of voice carefully, the dignity of the student is protected.

In scenario 4, response a comes from the judgmental parent, b from the irresponsible child, and c from the adult ego state. Again, the adult response is clearly the most effective.

In scenario 5, response a seems to come from a nurturing parent, b from a child or perhaps a judgmental parent (seeing only the words prevents us from knowing for sure, but it is definitely from an emotional ego state), while c comes from the adult ego state. In this case, however, the adult response is probably not the most effective for a struggling student. The nurturing parent response demonstrates a sensitivity that the student would likely perceive as helpful.

Although our discussion of transactional analysis is limited, you can see that it has great potential to impact the effectiveness of your course management. Like other concepts we present in this book, it is one of many tools that you might employ to improve outcomes with students and make your teaching more consistent and rewarding. Stay open to trying new approaches, even if they feel uncomfortable at first. Such openness is extremely critical in an age of accountability.

Special Strategies for Managing Large Classes

Over the past few decades, finances have constrained academic decision making. The strategy of employing large introductory classes to subsidize small upper-division and graduate-level classes is now a fact of life at many institutions. At the same time, the accountability movement will no longer permit some of the common shortcomings of large classes—such as students’ disengagement and easy tests that measure only surface knowledge—because these lead to low evaluations from students and other stakeholders and a perception of reduced learning. Besides dealing with security, confidentiality, and other logistical issues, those who teach large classes must markedly scrutinize their management of the learning process to ensure student success.
While true in a class of any size, the planning and organizing functions are especially critical in the effective management of large classes. Issues that should be addressed prior to the first class meeting to maximize student focus and minimize unproductive time include:

- Visiting the classroom well in advance so that you can leverage its size and equipment to orchestrate compelling “events” that could not be duplicated in a small classroom.
- Staggering dates of exams and submission dates for papers with those of your other courses to avoid bottlenecks in paper flow and delays in returning scored projects.
- Developing systems for expediting roll-taking, distribution of handouts, collection of student assignments (you might think about a slotted lock box), and other logistical tasks (Davis, 2001).
- Dedicating a seating area near the door for late arrivals and early leavers, and stressing noise minimization.
- Selecting a cadre of student aides, from previous proven students or new ones who visit your office prior to the start of the term, and providing a system of incentives that will foster their high achievement of quality service to students.

In your decision-making process, consult with other professors in your area to see what has worked well and poorly for them. Your strategies on the points that directly affect students must be clearly communicated in your syllabus, orally at the opening class meeting, and reinforced in other early meetings and as needed throughout the remainder of the term. Be cautious about ignoring negative feedback on your systems or changing them because a few students complain. Instead, conduct an informal evaluation by all students in the class partway into the course to ensure that the policies and procedures are workable in the majority of students’ eyes. (See Chapter 13 for more information on informal evaluations.)

Often, professors believe that the only workable instructional method in a large class is the lecture. After all, the rooms where we teach large classes are called lecture halls. We would like to propose, however, that the lecture is only one of the methods that can be used effectively in a large class. Research conducted by Graham Gibbs (1998), of the Open University, indicates that the effectiveness of large introductory classes is increased when the focus is on learning rather than on teaching, when assessment is strategically employed to foster focus on learning objectives, when students do for themselves and for each other some of what the professor once did for them, and when peer support and peer pressure are fostered. So, rather than employ the common authoritative approach, whose judgmental-parent ego state is likely to trigger students’ surreptitious rebellion and irresponsibility, you might want to consider an alternative instructional strategy. Another critical key to success in large classes is making them at times “psychologically small,” by dividing the large class into small groups for some of
the learning experiences—starting from the very first day. Students thus have a smaller number of classmates to get to know and can feel safe. When larger groups are needed, the professor can combine two or more smaller groups, gradually expanding the number of students who interact comfortably.

Part of making a class seem psychologically small is to learn as many students’ names as possible. As we discussed in Chapter 5, although learning names in a large class is more challenging doing so encourages participation by students who are more likely to feel anonymous. Consider having students make a note of every time they participate by asking a question, making a cogent comment, and so on, then direct them to turn in the notes, with their names, at the end of class each day, with enough description to allow the professor to identify the comment or question. The professor can then write back to each student with encouragement, answers, or whatever else is appropriate. A professor can also choose to give participation points to those students who take advantage of this learning opportunity.

A variation on this idea of participation notes allows you to take attendance as well. All students are given an index card on the first day. They write their names right on the top, and from that day forward they pick up their cards as they walk into class. The professor can see which cards are left in the box and thus can mark down absences. Either during the class or as a closure for the day, students are to write on their cards a question, a comment, a summary, or a point they would like to see reviewed in an upcoming class. After class, the professor can quickly read through these cards and get a sense of what was understood, what might still be muddy, and where an appropriate starting place for the next class period would be. They can also write back to the students to heighten the sense of connection that is so important to learning.

Earlier in this section, we mentioned dividing the class into small groups or teams. Teams of four to six students are typically large enough to provide diversity of experience and motivation, while being small enough to manage. In a class of several hundred, you might designate the teams with names of states or other geographical regions or the names of well-known political figures (e.g., Pierre Trudeau or John F. Kennedy). Allowing students to pick their own team members, following an icebreaker exercise (see Chapter 5), would reduce logistical challenges. You might also allow individuals to opt out, in which case they would do the entire team project themselves or with fewer partners. In giving broad assignments, make it clear that team members must divide the work equitably. Team members could then evaluate the contribution of their teammates by assigning shares of a total allocation and communicating this allocation to you by private e-mail. For example, if you use five-member teams, each member would be expected to divide 400 points among the other team members (i.e., the rater excludes him- or herself). The scores from one member for the other members might be 120, 110, 90, 80. All of the team members’ scores will be averaged, creating the individual team member’s score on the project. (To protect an indi-
individual student's grade, a minimum threshold of 50 points might be imposed.) You or one of your teaching assistants should probably meet early in the term with each team to clarify understanding of the syllabus, assignments, and so on. Or you might have the teams select captains with whom you will meet. You can also create e-mail lists for each team, and the class as a whole, to dispense information throughout the term and to facilitate feedback as projects move along. Such a setup can establish a didactic environment not only between you and your students but also among the students themselves.

You need not limit the use of teams to outside assignments. Learning within the classroom is greatly enhanced when students are expected to play a more active role than they typically play in a large lecture-driven class. For example, after delivering a certain amount of material from the front of the room, have students discuss that material in pairs or "buzz groups." Display several questions to be answered within the small group and then shared with another group across the aisle. In such a process, students advance in Bloom's taxonomy toward a greater understanding of critical course concepts.

Employing teams and group discussions not only facilitates management of the large course but also creates opportunities for support and competition that will likely make the course more enjoyable for students while improving the quality of their learning. Working in teams also gives students an opportunity to develop their interpersonal skills and fosters learning beyond the classroom. Finally, this strategy helps you manage your time effectively by allowing you to focus on issues that emerge throughout the term as teams meet, rather than dealing with an array of questions all at the same time. Once you have experienced the results of this approach and have worked through the loss of ego gratification that comes from being the "sage on the stage," you will likely ask yourself why it took you so long to understand that education is more about student learning than it is about teaching.

Managing the First Exam or Major Assignment

No event demonstrates your success as a teacher more than does your first major examination or assignment. As we noted in Chapter 2, the first exam or major assignment is often the most critical milepost in students' deciding to remain in a course through its conclusion. Therefore, it is imperative that such assessment tools are well designed, fair, and deemed relevant by the students—issues that will be addressed comprehensively in Chapter 10. In addition, it is essential to view this critical milepost in a context that recognizes both student responsibility and professors' accountability. We do not believe the first exam or assignment should be made artificially easy—in fact, it should reinforce high standards. However professors should provide students with clear expectations of the exercise so
that their study time is focused and that the scores reward those who are most effectively prepared.

First, as you teach, clue students in to important concepts and ideas that you intend to include on the examination. Provide an ample review—both in writing and orally, and perhaps a short sample exercise that includes questions similar to those that will appear on the exam. Also tell them what format(s) the examination will use—multiple-choice, short-answer, essay, or some combination of these formats—and how much time they will have to complete the examination. If you intend to use essay questions, you should provide sample questions and a rubric for how you will evaluate the answers. Remember, examinations should not serve the purpose of catching the ill-prepared student but should instead help you and your students evaluate their understanding of the content they have been studying.

The first true psychological milepost for retention is the students’ perceptions of their first exam or assignment results. Some students will inherently know how they did, while others will need to see the scored document. Typically some will underperform and be the most likely to drop the course. Anticipating this result, strategic professors must decide what, if any, action they will take to deal with the situation. “Curving” the test results—in which students are awarded unearned points so that the total class results more closely approximate a bell curve—is in our minds indefensible in an age of accountability. When students underperform on the first exam, you should conduct an analysis of the test results—perhaps facilitated by a Scantron system or other technological tactic—which identifies the test items most frequently missed, then evaluate each frequently missed item for its clarity, validity, and other salient features. The presence of poorly constructed questions, answered correctly by only a few students, might indicate that you should omit those questions and recalculate the scores. Another possibility that one of the authors has employed with great success is to offer students the opportunity to drop their score on the first exam. He reasons that some students add the course late, are delayed in purchasing the text, or have somewhat valid reasons for not being as prepared as they might be. Since his syllabus lists five total assignments, each weighted at 20 percent of the final course grade, he allows students to exercise “Plan B” by simply writing that phrase on the next scored assignment. He goes on to explain that there will be no “Plan C, D, or X.” Each term he is convinced that several students are retained who would have otherwise dropped the class (Lyons, Kysilka, and Pawlas, 1999).

If your scored assignment is a major paper or project, you should break the assignment into several chunks and provide feedback to your students on each of them. For a major paper, you might have students develop a theme statement and an outline of the argument to submit for review and scoring. The second chunk might focus on the resources they intend to use to build their argument, and the final piece may be the completed paper. Every major written assignment or project should be coupled with a rubric (see Chapter 11) that is shared with the student at the time the assignment is made. By giving students the scoring criteria up front, you indicate what is important to you; students can then expend
their time and energy in positive ways to complete the assignment. If students perceive that you are fair in the assignments and feedback you give, they will be more likely to persist in your course.

Surviving When You Are Not Prepared

At one time or another, all professors face a class for which they are not prepared, because of an emergency illness, family problems, or last-minute demands by administrators. Most students are reasonably understanding the first time this happens. However, they do not tolerate a consistent lack of preparation and are not shy about expressing their dissatisfaction either on student evaluations or directly to institutional leaders. The following strategies can help you to cover for yourself when you are unprepared to meet your class:

- Seek help from a colleague who has an area of expertise that can fit into your curriculum. Fellow faculty members are often willing to become a last-minute guest speaker in a pinch and may even enjoy conversing with your students on a topic they are really excited about.

- Have students engage in brainstorming activities regarding a concept or an idea you presented in a previous class. Through the brainstorming, they can examine ideas from a variety of perspectives and perhaps gain a more thorough understanding of the concept or idea.

- Break students into small groups and have them develop questions they think would be appropriate on their next examination. You might even suggest that they write sample exam items. You can then incorporate their suggestions into the examination you give. Such an activity not only serves as a review for your students but also provides you with information about what they perceive to be the most important concepts to learn.

- Locate a video at your institution’s media center or a video rental store that can embellish what you have been teaching. The video may provide an opposite viewpoint, emphasize important concepts, raise specific questions, or simply clarify for students what they read.

- Have students work in groups on an upcoming project. You might even excuse them to go to the library or computer lab to work on their project. Students, particularly if they are busy adults, appreciate having some class time to work on projects. Have them report on their progress at the next class meeting so that they do not take advantage of the released time to do other things.

- As a last resort, admit to students that you are not as prepared as you intended to be, and ask them how they could best use the class time. Whenever you give students the authority to make decisions, you are obligated to abide by those
decisions even when you do not approve of them. If students say, “Let’s cancel class,” you may find that you simply lose class time. In letting students plan activities, you can set parameters saying, for example, “Why don’t we do some brainstorming—anything but canceling class is a valid option—then select the one that would be of greatest value.”

Being spontaneous and relaxed can usually help you through awkward moments. If an emergency arises that causes you to miss class, be sure to notify the administrator who is designated, in turn, to notify your class. When you return to class, apologize to your students and adjust your syllabus accordingly. Having collected e-mail and phone numbers of all the students in your class, you can notify them easily in advance about your impending absence and later follow up with them about how you plan to make up the lost time. Even if you notify your students directly, remember to notify your administrator as well.

**Adhering to Ethical Standards**

Like all professionals, college professors must adhere to a code of ethics that serves as a guide to fair and equal treatment of all students in their classes. Behaving in ethical ways is easier if you familiarize yourself with your institution’s policies regarding students’ rights and responsibilities, and if you attempt to view situations through the eyes of the stakeholders. Read both the student handbook that outlines students’ rights and the faculty handbook that indicates your rights, responsibilities, and rules of conduct. In the absence of written rules provided by your institution, the following guidelines related to commonly occurring challenges could serve you well:

- Discuss student progress or problems *only* with the student. If a student is a legal minor, you may be asked to speak to a parent or guardian, but this should be done in the presence of the student. Remember, your students are adults and the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), enacted in 1974, protects them against disclosure of critical information.

- If students share troubling information with you—such as details about illegal activities or mental/emotional distress—encourage them to access support resources available to them on campus, such as free counseling services. If students are hesitant about contacting these services, you might ask if they would prefer that you make an appointment for them. In that way, you can help them avoid the awkwardness of having to call a stranger for help. If a student refuses to get help, and you believe that student can become dangerous to him- or herself or to others, seek the advice of your administrator. Between the two of you, you can research institutional policies and procedures to find a way to help the student, or at least to protect other students and yourself.
Do not accept payment from students for tutoring, consulting, or similar duties that are a logical extension of your role. Similarly, if you use books you publish or other materials you own in your classes, you need to be certain that any royalties you earn from those materials are given to your institution’s foundation. Books and materials sold to students enrolled in other institutions can of course contribute to your income.

Be careful about socializing with your students. Many professors like to celebrate the end of a term with their students, particularly if the class was an exceptionally good one. Bringing snacks to class is probably acceptable (but check with your school policy). Planning to go to a restaurant or pub, however, may be a little more risky. If you meet at an establishment where alcohol is served and any of your underage students is caught drinking, you could be held liable. Even when all of your students are legal age, in today’s litigious society you may find yourself involved in a lawsuit if, during or after a party you arranged or sanctioned, any student is injured or injures someone else. Decline any invitations by your students to parties with them away from the campus. Another note of caution: Under no circumstances should you ever celebrate with only one or two students. Not only could your reputation be tarnished, perhaps irreparably, but you also risk putting students in an extremely awkward situation vis-à-vis their families, peers, and campus or community authorities. This precept certainly precludes dating students, even if they are single and close to your age. Dating students can put both parties into very uncomfortable situations and can jeopardize your future at your institution.

Professional Practices Exercise

Since professional challenges arise suddenly, let us present some potential situations, give you an opportunity to respond, and then debrief with some useful insights regarding each scenario.

1. At the conclusion of your Tuesday-morning class, you return to your office to find an adult female whom you don’t know reviewing the office hours posted on your door. After you introduce yourself, she responds in a nervous tone, “I’m Mary Smith, the mother of April Miller, who is a student in the class you just completed.” You invite her into your office, ask her to have a seat, and offer her some water. She continues, “April didn’t come home last night, and we’re worried sick. For the past couple of weeks, she has been behaving erratically. Has she been having problems in your class?”

2. In your largest class, Chris is clearly one of the brightest students. Seemingly without having to exert himself, Chris was able to achieve scores on the first two exams in the low 90s. Earlier today, as Chris submitted the first term paper, you overheard a conversation between him and one of his friends that led you to believe that his paper might be inappropriate. Giving
it a quick review in your office, you notice that although it is well written, the paper does not fit several of the specific performance standards you identified at the time the assignment was made.

3. Samantha struggled the entire term in your class. She came by your office nearly every week to get tutoring on difficult issues. By the end of the term, she had made very good progress, scoring an A on the last unit exam. On the last day of the term, barely an hour after completing her final exam, Samantha appeared at your office door with a gift-wrapped package in her hands. Holding the gift toward you, she expressed how thankful she was for the help that you had provided her in the course and asked that you accept the gift as a symbol of her appreciation.

4. Your Wednesday-evening class has been an absolute joy to teach. Mostly working adults, the students have arrived promptly and been well prepared for each class meeting, worked cohesively in small-group situations, and performed well on all of your assessment activities. Tonight, as you distribute the final exam, one of the informal leaders announces, “We’re meeting down at the Campus Pub to celebrate after the test is over. Won’t you join us?”

**Debriefing**

1. Unfortunately, Ms. Smith’s situation is becoming increasingly common. When her daughter was younger, she may well have had the child’s behavioral issues addressed proactively by the teachers and administrators of schools that April attended. Now, however, April at least eighteen years old, is no longer considered a minor. FERPA protects even immature adults from unwarranted disclosure of their educational progress. While using your emotional intelligence to demonstrate genuine concern for Ms. Smith, it is critical not to divulge information that would put yourself, or potentially April, at risk.

2. The challenge this situation presents has been complicated greatly by the advent of the Internet, the rise in the number of classes with large enrollments, the changing perceptions of what cheating means, and other factors. The potential problems here are many and varied, but it is critical to address the situation soberly, without accusing Chris of cheating. The possibilities include, but are not limited to, Chris’s having downloaded a paper from a Web vendor of such products, his resubmitting a paper written for a previous class, and his using material provided by his peers. Your most responsible strategy might be to ask a colleague to be present in your office when you bring Chris by after your next class for a clarification meeting. Broach the topic clearly by stating what you actually saw and heard. Then say, “Chris, I have questions about the goals and direction of the paper you recently submitted. Would you help me understand how you approached it?” As you listen closely to his response, you might—rather than asking additional, pointed questions too quickly—rephrase and reflect
his explanation so that you become clear on all salient issues. While submitting downloaded papers is clearly plagiarism, and likely subject to your institution’s disciplinary policies, it may well be that Chris did not understand the implications of his resubmitting a paper with few or no changes.

3. The acceptance of any gift from a student enrolled in your class jeopardizes your being viewed as objective in the determination of final grades. Thank Samantha for her thoughtfulness, but tell her that your help was provided with no expectation of reward. Encourage her to extend the gift to a family member or friend for whom such an expression of gratitude is appropriate.

4. Never drink with students while they are enrolled in your classes. Besides the absence of professionalism that the acceptance of this invitation would demonstrate, there are at least three major risks to you. First, if you attend, your students’ pub outing may well appear to an administrator, a judge hearing a drunken-driving/injury case, or some other official to be a sanctioned class event. Second, if even one of your students is underage, your pub appearance could make you liable for contributing to the delinquency of a minor. Finally, if even one of the students has a history of substance abuse, you do not want to support an event that may contribute to his or her difficulty. You can either ask the class to move the celebration to a venue that does not serve alcohol or to politely beg off.

Dealing with Disruptive Students

In all areas of society—higher education included—many people feel that incivility has escalated in both degree and frequency. Remember that students arrive in classrooms with increasing amounts of baggage; you cannot expect your teaching to be immune from disruptive incidents. Although we offer no guarantee, we believe that the suggestions we make in this book about getting to know students and understanding their learning styles will go a long way toward preventing the frequency and degree of disruptive behavior.

We nonetheless realize that some situations arise that inevitably trigger unacceptable reactions in some students. Such reactions are likely to include loud excessive talking, profane or defamatory language, or physical invasion of others’ space. In an increasingly accountability-minded and litigious society, you cannot fail to respond when students cross the line with you or with their fellow students. Not responding to unacceptable behavior from a student creates a hostile environment for other students, reduces the effectiveness of instruction, and detracts from your standing with students. We encourage the following practices become a part of your style addressing such situations:

- Refer students to campus support resources.
- Confront students quietly outside of class.
Employ your adult ego state and refuse to become angry, sarcastic, or accusatory.
Go the extra mile to preserve the dignity of all concerned.
Keep private issues private.
Document actions and words immediately, and inform those who have responsibility for student affairs.

Summary of Key Points

- Develop a means to organize your materials that works effectively for you.
- Plan your daily agenda and have lesson plans for each class meeting.
- Provide feedback to your students—privately and in open classroom settings.
- Start and stop your classes on time.
- Plan breaks accordingly and restart your class on time.
- Plan for such environmental factors as roll taking, late arrivals, and housekeeping.
- Develop alternatives to the lecture format for large classes.
- Strive to engage your students at adult levels of conversation.
- Prepare the first exam or major assignment carefully to ensure fairness and relevance.
- Have alternatives in mind when you are underprepared or have to cancel a class.
- Adhere to a code of ethics and professional practices.
- Address disruptive students proactively.
- Remember to have fun!

Through the Professors’ Eyes

PAT: I am always trying to improve my organizational strategies. Years ago, I found that keeping separate notebooks for each of my classes really works well for me. I have developed sets of transparencies that I have labeled according to my course objectives. I keep them in plastic page protectors, secured in notebooks so they are handy and ready to use. They also don’t get messed up that way. I also have identified videos that can be used for each course and keep a list of them filed with each course notebook so that I can remember their specific strengths and weaknesses. I’m always on the lookout for new materials, and I ask my students to help too. Many times they will see something on television that directly applies to what I am teaching, and they let me know or even bring me a recorded video clip. I put a lot of stock in student recommendations and try to use those that are a good fit for the course. The more organized I am with respect to my class, the more comfortable I am about exploring beyond the course objectives. Sometimes, the spontaneous
discussions are much more fruitful than the activities I planned for class. I like the freedom to adventure into unplanned tangents and can nearly always relate such escapades to my class objectives.

DALE: I have never really had much problem with course organization. I have identified the essential information and have found the most efficient way to present it is through well-designed and well-orchestrated lectures. I’ve developed a very effective presentation of my course content. The students don’t complain when they get an excellent lecture. Being highly organized in my teaching provides me with the time I want to do my research and work on my publications. Since I teach the same class every term, I don’t need to worry about how I manage my course. It’s all in one notebook. The only time I really need to make adjustments is when new versions of textbooks come out—I usually vote to adopt the texts that have been used the previous year. Why reinvent the wheel? Most are very good books, though perhaps not the best on the market. Students do increasingly complain about the costs of textbooks.

KIM: I am having some conflicts in my thinking about how to teach my classes. I know what needs to be taught, and my department colleagues and mentor have really helped me. I have discovered, though, that they are all busy with their own work, so I try not to ask trivial questions and use up their goodwill. I am trying to meet my students’ expectations and my college’s student-centered learning goals, but I am really more comfortable in the more formal lecture format. After all, that model is what I know best. I also note a difference between the learning goals of my younger and older students. When I do plan some student-centered activities, my older students do not participate as well as my younger students do. One of my older students seems to feel that a lack of English language skills is synonymous with lack of intelligence, and I am challenged not to become angry with him. Other older students seem to think they can be very informal with me and can call me by my first name. Although they are my elders by several years, I do not think that is good and sometimes worry that what they are doing does not show the respect a professor deserves. One of my Eastern European colleagues allows her students to call her Dr. D. Maybe I can let my students call me Dr. Kim. I am trying so hard to find a “best way” to organize my classes and to establish rapport with my students. I am getting so frustrated. There is so much to think about and to plan for—I thought teaching would be easier than this.

Tips for Thriving

Interacting with students in class can be one of the most rewarding aspects of your career. In order to be highly successful in that endeavor, you need to answer a few important questions:
1. What would you expect from the class if you were the student?
2. What activities would you enjoy most if you were a student in your class?
3. What other activities should you plan in order to meet the needs of the diverse students in your class?
4. How can you make large classes seem small?
5. What were the communication strategies of your best professors?
6. What are the fundamentals of ethical practice?

By answering these questions, you will have guidelines that can make you successful in your classes. If after you plan your course, you reexamine your efforts by thinking as a student, you should be able to make your classes both enjoyable and challenging. Remember, students really do like to be fairly challenged. Also keep in mind that a good teacher is a good listener who can alter conditions of learning as necessary to ensure good learning by the students.

**Suggested Readings**


CHAPTER 8

Student-Driven Learning Methods

FOCUS QUESTIONS

- Why do students benefit from directing their own learning activities?
- What are the proven student-driven learning strategies?
- How can classroom discussions be made effective for today’s students?
- How can you incorporate contemporary strategies into your teaching?

Good teachers possess a capacity for connectedness. They are able to weave a complex web of connections between themselves, their subjects, and their students so that students can learn to weave a world for themselves.

—Parker Palmer

Think back to a time when a magical curiosity drove you to pursue the understanding of a particular idea. Perhaps it involved a science experiment you devised yourself, a historical figure with a shrouded past on whom you developed a presentation, or a seed planted by a guest speaker in one of your classes—whatever it was, it dramatically pushed the limits of your known world. The pursuit of knowledge for the sheer pleasure of knowing is a powerful force. The best teachers demonstrate an awareness of this fact in their teaching and, moving at a pace that fits their students, seek to move each learner toward greater self-direction of their learning.

Extending the attention on learning methods begun in Chapter 7, this chapter focuses on those methods primarily controlled and directed by students themselves. We should note, first, that we understand why many professors would
question the wisdom of employing such methods. After all, today’s students appear to need a great deal of structure to guide their learning—in and outside the classroom. Extensive research (Dunn and Griggs, 2000; Light, 2001) has identified some common learning challenges, many of which we discussed in Chapter 3. Traditionalists might ask, “If students are so capable of directing their own learning, why are colleges and universities even needed?” The answer might be that the ultimate goal of higher education in today’s world is to enable students to access and process rapidly changing information—in effect, to become their own lifelong teachers. Keep this complex philosophical context in mind as we describe the potential benefits of incorporating an appropriate ratio of student-driven versus instructor-controlled teaching and learning activities into your courses.

As we said in Chapter 7, ultimately, of course, which methods you use will depend on your determination of the best way to achieve a particular learning objective. Here we will add that, although you will initially make the strategic determination of which instructional method to use, it is your students who will take on much of the responsibility for what happens in the future.

The Contemporary View

At several earlier points we stated that the strategic teacher must start where the learner is, and we suggested that many learners may not be where you hope they would be. At the same time, other students will be well beyond where you might expect them to be. Television, the Internet, and other forms of rapid-turnaround information-delivery systems have expanded the quantity and enriched the realism and currency of information to which students have been regularly exposed. In the 1940s, Americans read newspapers or listened to radio accounts of World War II battles—sometimes days after they occurred. Today people watch battles on live television, complete with instant analysis by commentators knowledgeable about the strategies of each warring party. Personal computers—in schools, in homes, and at work—have empowered today’s college students to pursue information of their own choosing and at their own pace. Web searches are far more efficient than the library visits of earlier generations.

Several decades ago a professor could assume that students would arrive in the classrooms without much knowledge of the subject at hand and that he or she could shape and control the information flow that influenced the students, categorizing information into discrete compartments. In contrast, today’s instructors typically face students whose greatest need is to sort out and make sense of the vast torrent of information that rushes all around them—this sorting out is a paradigm commonly referred to as contextual or constructivist learning. This approach flows from the research decades ago of renowned educational psychologist David Ausubel, who identified the single most critical factor influencing learning to be what the learner already knows (1978). He cautioned all educators to ascertain students’ existing knowledge base before developing their strategies. This dynamic shift
change in the flow of information, along with discoveries about how people learn, has fueled a movement that emphasizes helping learners make connections between their preexisting knowledge bases and new information or perspectives.

**Active Learning**

Student-driven learning methods are based on the concept of *active learning*. So that you better understand that term, let us once again employ a continuum, as we did in Chapter 7. If at one end we put active learning, what might we call the opposite extreme—passive learning?—or is that a state that does not exist? Do lectures, video presentations, and guest speakers engender passive learning? After 15 minutes or so for most learners, does the mind typically become occupied with other thoughts? The research would indicate that it does (Stage et al., 1998).

We define *active learning* as an approach selected by a professor in which the teaching and learning environment is designed for the learner to be actively engaged in the acquisition and processing of knowledge and information. In an active learning environment, students are doing much of the work, at their own pace, to achieve their individual learning objectives (Silberman, 1996).

Richard Hake (1998), a professor of physics at Indiana University, prefers a synonymous term: *interactive engagement*. He says that such learning involves methods “designed in part to promote conceptual understanding through interactive engagement of students in heads-on (always) and hands-on (usually) activities which yield immediate feedback through discussion with peers and/or instructors” (p. 65).

Although different theorists and practitioners give different definitions of this approach, those definitions commonly include students’ drawing on prior knowledge to make mental connections at ever-higher levels of learning. Whatever sources you consult on the topic, and whatever differences you find among them, keep your individual conceptualization of active learning in mind as you progress through this chapter.

Those of us writing and those of you reading this book have accepted the challenge of accountability for the student learning that occurs as a result of our teaching. We have all agreed that *student learning is paramount*. Every decision we make about *how* we teach and *what* we teach is made with the ultimate goal of fostering learning in students. Therefore, when you strategically choose to use student-driven methods, you are deciding that, to reach the ultimate goal of student learning, (1) students will be directing the learning along a continuum that fits their abilities; (2) the primary focus will be on a unique collection of students; and (3) students will be doing the majority of the work in the classroom and classroom-related activities. Your work comes before class when you are designing and preparing the learning experiences.

The operative word in the phrase *active learning* is the second one: **learning**. According to Angelo and Cross (1993), “Learning can and often does take
place without the benefit of teaching—and sometimes even in spite of it—but there is no such thing as effective teaching in the absence of learning” (p. 3). We agree wholeheartedly. As a professor in the age of accountability, you must make the extraordinary effort it often takes to ensure that students are actually learning what you are trying to teach.

Unfortunately, sometimes it is easier to convince professors of this than it is to convince students. But convince them we must, because students must now also accept this axiom, and thereby accept at least as much responsibility for their learning as we have. In a compelling article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (June 4, 1999), Mark Benvenuto offers the following, in response to a comment a student had written on an evaluation (“Get up to the f---ing board—that’s what we pay you for!”):

> Although many students may not want to hear it, for most of them, interactive learning is the same thing as taking your medicine. You may not like it, but it is good for you. You will learn more by being engaged in a class rather than just listening to a lecture. You will learn more by teaching your classmates, and asking them and the professor questions, than by just listening and answering others’ questions. You will learn more working in a group than working alone. You will learn more if you use your mind than if you come to class simply to be entertained. (p. B9)

We need to upgrade students’ perceptions of their responsibilities as learners. When we are strategic teachers and they are strategic learners, the teaching/learning experience is incomparable in its efficacy.

**Strategic Teaching Using Student-Driven Methods**

Teaching exclusively as you have been taught may be comfortable for you, but it is often not very effective with today’s students—nor is it preferable given what is now known about the brain and learning. Wherever you are in your teaching career, you can enhance your success by developing a teaching style that regularly employs some student-directed learning methods. You will need to experiment, analyze, and reflect on your efforts. You will also need to have regular discussions with colleagues experienced in these methods.

To begin, consider ways to promote learning both inside the classroom (when the students are right there with you) and outside the classroom (when the students are far away). The primary student-directed learning methods for use inside the classroom include open discussion, learning in small groups, role-playing, case studies, and student presentations. Methods for outside the classroom include experiential learning, fieldwork, and focused study time. Each of these broad areas
will be explored in the following sections. The suggested readings made at the end of the chapter are only a small sample of the works that have been written on these and similar topics.

**Strategic Use of Open Discussion**

In Chapter 7, we discussed the type of discussion led by the professor as a whole-group activity. In the open discussions we describe here, students lead the activity and direct the learning for themselves and their peers. The following are some techniques to use when you are having the students direct whole-class or large-group discussions themselves:

- Designate an item as the “speaking stick” or some such moniker. The person holding the item is the only person who may speak. Different rules may govern when and how this person passes the item to the next speaker, but the key factor is that total control of the speaking and the turn-taking is literally in the hands of the students.

- Even without a speaking stick, students can be in charge of calling on the next speaker. They should, of course, be encouraged to include as many different speakers as possible and to make sure that all parts of the room and both genders are represented fairly. (Men tend to be called on much more frequently than women, even by other women.)

- Use speaking chips. Purchase several sets of poker chips to distribute at the beginning of a discussion period. Either you or the students decide what each color represents and how many of each color the students should receive. For example, blue might represent questions, red could represent disagreements, and white could represent clarifications. Participants must give up a chip when they want to speak. They must be clear on which color they are using and then channel their comments to stay within that category. Limiting the number of chips keeps the discussion focused and prevents people from dominating.

- Conduct a fishbowl discussion. A reasonable number of students sit in a circle in the middle of the larger class. They are asked to discuss a question, a topic, or issue. The other students observe the discussion but may not speak until it is their turn in the middle. Whole groups may take turns in the fishbowl, or students can form tag teams whose members trade off as the situation requires. There is a lot of movement and engagement in this process.

The following are a few suggestions to make student-led small-group discussions productive:
Present questions or problems for the group to discuss simultaneously. You may have generated these, or the students may have. Give them adequate time to formulate answers. Then have them either “report out” one group at a time or confer with another group to share what they determined.

Present different questions for each group. This works particularly well if the questions are ones that the students brought to class—questions for which they want answers. Then, after adequate time, each group can give their answers to the whole class.

Provide groups of six to ten students with a controversial statement related to course content. Each group then prepares both “pro” and “con” positions. After adequate time, the group is randomly divided and must conduct a debate for the class. Thus, the members do not know ahead of time which side they will have to take. You can expect high energy on this.

Invest time reinforcing the learning that has occurred during a discussion period. Too often, students are conditioned to take notes only when the teacher is talking, so they fail to record critical information during discussions. Emphasize the amount of learning that has occurred, the excellent points that were made by fellow students, and the new ideas you have garnered as a result of hearing the discussion. Of course, you can always say something to the effect of “I made some excellent notes today for ideas that I want to address in our next exam. I hope that you made extensive notes as well.” If they didn’t take notes this time, they will next time!

Strategic Use of Small-Group Learning Strategies

A popular instructional development of recent years has been the use of small groups within classrooms to provide students an engaging, nonthreatening learning experience. The strategy leverages the tenets of the constructivist approach, whose adherents believe that students, rather than coming to the course with a “blank slate,” construct new knowledge within the parameters of their existing knowledge. Although purists differentiate cooperative learning (teacher controls activities, monitors work closely) and collaborative learning (students direct their own learning, while the teacher serves as a resource) along a continuum, many practitioners treat the terms as largely synonymous (Panitz, 2001). While there is value in considering the connotations of each term individually, we will focus initially on their common elements:

1. Positive interdependence of goals, roles, resources, and rewards. Students must believe that they are linked with others such that one cannot succeed unless the other members of the group also succeed.
2. **Face-to-face promotive interaction.** Students must help, assist, encourage, and support one another's efforts to learn.

3. **Individual accountability.** Each student's performance is assessed, and the results are given back to the group and the individual.

4. **Social skills.** Taking the lead, making decisions, building trust, communicating, and managing conflict are all practiced in small groups.

5. **Group processing.** Members monitor how well goals are being achieved and how well effective working relationships are being maintained.

It is these five elements that differentiate cooperative/collaborative learning groups from traditional discussion groups and a well-structured cooperative/collaborative learning lesson from a poorly structured one (Johnson, Johnson, and Smith, 1991).

Strategic use of cooperative/collaborative learning groups contributes to an egalitarian environment in the classroom and shifts the role of the instructor to that of a facilitator of learning. To facilitate means to draw upon the existing collective knowledge base of a given assemblage of students and to then integrate additional sources when appropriate. A cooperative/collaborative classroom is a more participatory and flexible learning environment than is an instructor-centered classroom. Since cooperative/collaborative learning mirrors the movement within the American workplace toward use of self-directed work teams, many professors who prepare students for occupations employ it widely.

Like any tool, cooperative/collaborative learning has both strengths and weaknesses. Its advantages include:

- Engaging the learning systems of each student actively, through positive interdependence.
- Empowering students to pursue learning that each perceives as relevant, thus creating individual accountability.
- Building the interpersonal skills necessary for success in the larger society.
- Developing solutions that integrate multiple perspectives.
- Allowing the instructor to effectively manage the learning environment by monitoring group work and interceding where most appropriate.

The major disadvantage of cooperative learning is that some students (typically a small minority) may take advantage of the ostensible freedom of this approach to piggyback on the efforts of other group members. To prevent this, the instructor must:

- Teach students how to be effective members of cooperative groups.
- Decide on group sizes and numbers, placement of students within groups, room arrangement, and planning materials.
- Specify objectives for the learning experience.
Monitor student behavior, including assistance with the task, processing of discoveries, and bringing closure to the exercise.

- Structure win/win outcomes, individual accountability, and intergroup cooperation.
- Intervene, when necessary, to ensure that students are behaving and contributing as appropriate.
- Evaluate the quantity and quality of students’ learning.

Before employing a more collaborative approach that provides students greater input into these tasks and responsibilities, the professor should assess the comfort level of students with a looser approach. Collaborative approaches typically extend learning to outside the classroom, where students are conducting research and holding meetings (albeit some in cyberspace) to accomplish project goals (Millis and Cottell, 1998), (Matthews, 1996).

The time you invest in additional planning for cooperative/collaborative learning activities is usually rewarded by the freedom you gain to monitor implementation and the opportunity you gain to provide individualized coaching for students whose needs are greatest. While your initial efforts at employing these strategies might leave you wondering if you have performed your duties, you will likely soon realize the advantages of being able to circulate around the classroom to become more familiar with the needs of individual students.

The size of the groups will vary according to the tasks, but groups of four to seven students typically work most effectively. The smaller the group, the less information and experience there is upon which to develop solutions. The larger the group, the smaller the opportunity is for individual students, especially shy ones, to contribute. Larger groups also lend themselves to being dominated by one or two students, yet they can also be more diverse. Discussions are livelier and solutions more broadly based when members are diverse in age, gender, race, and other factors. To ensure diversity, it is typically more effective to assign students to groups, rather than allowing students to select for themselves.

When the group work will be done in class, random assignment usually works well. Simply divide the total number of students in the class by the number you want in each group to determine the number of groups. Then, beginning at a convenient place within the class, have students count off up to the number of groups you need. Then have all the “number 1s” gather to conduct their discussion. Proceed with the “number 2s” and so on. You can also form random groups by having students draw numbers or items of a particular type or color from a container.

Random assignments do not work well for groups that will be meeting outside of class because of students’ disparate schedules, areas of residence, and other factors. One of the biggest complaints that students have about cooperative/collaborative groups is the difficulty finding time to meet. Such activity typically also does not foster the spirit of collaboration that is intended to maximize student learning and also sometimes leads students to divide the work too nar-
rowly and piece it back together at the end, resulting in insufficient mastery of the total project. Therefore, strategic professors take students’ schedules into account as they assign groups. Proactively creating groups that can meet will significantly increase the likelihood that they do meet and will lower what David Yamane (1996) calls “transaction costs,” that is, the prices students pay for having to work collectively.

The effectiveness of small-group learning depends largely on the quality of the learning experience you design or have students design with your review and approval. Having students group together to answer the review questions at the end of the textbook chapter may be only slightly more effective than assigning the same material as individual homework. Using a custom-designed case problem with interesting characters and situations is more likely to provide a dynamic learning opportunity that cannot be duplicated at home or in the library. Employing a competitive classroom activity—such as the Circle of Knowledge in Appendix 8.1—can lead to a far greater mastery of course material than you otherwise would be able to achieve. Learning experiences that require students to explore their personal values and discuss them with those of diverse beliefs create a truly synergistic environment. As always, think about why you are having students take part in a particular learning experience. Never use group work for its own sake. Rather, use it because it will lead to outcomes superior to those of another instructional method (Colberg et al., 1996), (Dunn and Dunn, 1999).

Regardless of their size, composition, and place of meeting, it is critical to monitor the groups’ progress. When you are using groups within the regularly scheduled class meeting, move quickly throughout the entire classroom during the initial phases to gauge all groups’ understanding of the assignment and outcome to be produced. Then, observe from a distance and circulate more deliberately to help any groups that get stuck. Rather than simply providing information, ask questions that will stimulate students to uncover clues for solving their own problems. You will no doubt see some students emerge as teachers of their peers within each group. This benefits all students—teaching others helps students synthesize their own masters of concepts, and learning from peers helps students understand information and concepts they might not have understood from a lecture or textbook.

When students are involved in small-group learning outside the regularly scheduled class meetings, you must be diligent to ensure that everyone understands the tasks, roles, objectives, time frame, and so on. Some professors make time to meet with individual groups working on long-term projects. Others establish specific times for the group leaders to consult on challenges. Still others use e-mail to allow student teams to convey overall progress, problems, issues, and the like.

Following any group learning experience, it is essential to facilitate a debriefing that enables students to develop a sense of accomplishment and place their discoveries in a proper context. Ask questions—both rhetorical and pointed—to bring the activity to a satisfactory level of closure. A debriefing might include
additional out-of-class research to develop a more comprehensive solution, which
the group can present at the opening of the following class meeting.

Another small-group strategy coming into widespread use is Problem-Based
Learning (PBL). John Cavanaugh, vice-provost for academic programs and plan-
ning at the University of Delaware and principal investigator on the Pew grant,
sorts out the place of PBL among the various learning strategies as follows: “Imag-
ine a family tree: Active Learning would be at the top. Cooperative/Collabora-
tive would be a subset of that, and I see PBL as a subset of Coop/Collab based
on cases. All forms of group work do not center on cases; problem-based groups
do” (Rhcm, 1998).

Whereas typical cooperative/collaborative groups are set up to reinforce
learning of material that an instructor has already presented, PBL introduces stu-
dents to new material through a problem addressed in small groups. The goal in
doing so is to stimulate higher-order thinking. PBL is used extensively in health
sciences education because it gives the students in that field opportunities to con-
tinually apply preexisting knowledge and build on it, rather than just trying to
learn new material that has no link to what they already know. Professors in other
disciplines as well have begun writing PBL cases for their students because the
power of this learning format is enormous (Spence, 2001).

In your first efforts to employ one of the various modes of small-group learn-
ing, you are likely to feel unnecessary once the groups get going. You may even
feel guilty about either not being “in charge” of the classroom or not “covering”
more material. A few students, imprinted by a consumer mind-set, might imply
that you have somehow shirked your responsibilities by not directing the class.
After observing the quality of the discussion, monitoring students’ overall reac-
tion, and speaking with experienced facilitators, you will likely overcome your
negative feelings rather quickly and find yourself looking for additional oppor-
tunities to employ small-group learning strategies (Fallows and Ahmet, 1999).

One last recommendation concerning small group work: Evaluate group
cooperation and collaboration along with the final product. Students consider
graded activities to be important. Therefore, if professors do not assess their co-
operation and collaboration along with other aspects of their work, students will
not attend to increasing their team-building and emotional intelligence skills. You
must determine what percentage of the overall grade will be for teamwork and
provide it in writing at the time the assignment is made. A handout for the proj-
et could say, for example:

There is a reason why I am having you complete this task as a group. I believe that
in many cases two or more heads are better than one. So that you know I am seri-
ous about what I am saying, 40 percent of your grade will be based on the effec-
tiveness of your collaborative effort. I will make that judgment by considering the
following:

- Observations of your group interactions when you are in the classroom.
Explication of the role(s) that each group member played in the final product. Each member of the group will write an explication of what everyone in the group did (including self).

Weekly scores given by each member of the group to the rest of the members. Those scores will be divided as follows: Assuming that you have four members in your group, each member of the group will have 100 points to divide up among all the members of the group. Each person MUST give him- or herself 25 of the points and then award the other 75 points based on a rubric-driven evaluation of how well each of the other members of the group contributed to the project. Sharing the aggregated scores on a weekly basis provides invaluable feedback to individual members of the group, which provides increasingly specific focus and motivation.

The overall sense that the rest of the class and I have about whether or not you are working seamlessly as a team when you do your final presentation. We have all, unfortunately, witnessed group presentations that were done by a minority of members who had divided up the workload and never communicated about what was being done or what was being learned. What I want to see is a group presentation that showcases each member’s ability to take over any one of the other roles, because you are so familiar with all parts of the material and those parts fit together.

More and more students arriving in college and university classrooms are used to working with other students—but they may not know how to be members of a true team. Employers and community leaders are looking for people who can be contributing members of true teams. There is much professors can do to give students this experience within their programs.

**Strategic Use of Role-Playing**

As a learning method, role-playing attempts to help students discover personal meanings in a given subject or resolve personal dilemmas with the aid of their social group. Whenever students take risks, as they do in improvisation, they typically achieve a valid educational payoff. In a more intensive and personal way than other teaching-learning methodologies, role-playing:

- Allows students to develop an understanding of others’ perspectives.
- Encourages students to work with others in analyzing situations and developing workable solutions.
- Provides students an opportunity to apply concepts they have learned in a rich, realistic environment.
- Gives students the chance to gain insights into interpersonal challenges they are likely to face in their careers and private lives.
- Enables students to effectively contrast problem-solving methods or take on diverse perspectives.
- Offers a constructive channel through which to express feelings and process feedback.
- Presents students with a forum for building self-esteem and confidence.
- Helps students realize that college courses can be fun (Lyons, Kysilka, and Pawlas, 1999).

Whether the scenarios selected are deadly serious or lighthearted or whether they focus on the affective (i.e., emotional), psychomotor, or cognitive learning domains (or a combination of these), role-playing can have a dramatic impact on student learning. It can make an important contribution to the long-term retention of fundamental concepts. The varieties of scenarios and learning goals are endless, but in each case the instructor must:

- Identify and introduce to the class a sufficiently explicit problem and the surrounding issues.
- Explain the rules that will guide the role-playing exercise.
- Match and orient students to the roles within the activity.
- Involve even extremely shy students, perhaps as chief observers or evaluators.
- Set the stage for students, which includes establishing observation tasks.
- Monitor the activity to ensure it takes an appropriate direction.
- Debrief the participants afterward to ensure accomplishment of desired learning outcomes.

Role-playing is an especially effective teaching/learning tool within the social sciences and occupational disciplines. What more effective way to learn about the judicial system could be found than by conducting a mock trial? Or what more valid means of understanding entrepreneurship could be used than developing a business plan and presenting it to a (peer) group of potential financial backers? How might students better develop conversational foreign-language skills than by role-playing an everyday situation staged in an appropriate location?

When they know they will be closely scrutinized by their peers, many otherwise passive students will prepare extensively to deliver an authentic representation of a given role. With prompting, they will ask themselves all sorts of “what-if” questions, continuously improving the quality of their learning up through and including the presentation. Such learning activities clearly have the potential for enriched learning unmatched by other instructional methods.

**Strategic Use of Student Presentations**

Students master and retain learning quite effectively when they present their work to others. Many people can remember details of a school presentation they made long ago. Regardless of the discipline area, your students will likely benefit from making presentations also—that is, as long as you follow sound practices.
First, remember that the number one fear of adults is public speaking, so your students, whatever their age, are likely to need a great deal of reassurance. One key form of reassurance that many professors overlook is providing students with an adequate overview of the assignment. As a result, students commonly make unfocused, disjointed presentations—which contributes to feelings of inadequacy the next time around. Therefore, students should be provided—in writing and well in advance—the objectives of the presentation, as well as a detailed scoring rubric. In a large course or when building teamwork is an especially desirable goal, you might consider having students make presentations to a subset of the class, or in a group setting—for example, as a member of a forum or panel discussion. Presenting to a small group is less frightening than presenting to a large group, particularly if the chosen subset of the class has been working together on various projects through the semester.

If yours is an introductory course and/or students voice considerable anxiety, provide individual coaching or model presentation skills, showing students how to gain viewers’ attention, use visual aids, form a powerful conclusion, and so on. You can also have a student with a proven track record in another professor’s class demonstrate effective presentation skills. Videos on how to develop an excellent presentation are another possibility. A final, but far less desirable, option is to deliver a full presentation yourself, emphasizing in advance the key techniques students should look for. Some students would likely have difficulty separating such a presentation from a regular lecture or demonstration, while others might view such a presentation as the model and work so hard to duplicate it that they appear unnatural.

Viewers and speakers can derive full value from presentations only when feedback is plentiful, objective, and consistent. We recommend allowing viewers to contribute to the evaluation of their peers. One frequently used method is to give viewers index cards on which they are asked to do a “three by three”; that is, they are to write down three strong points and three suggested improvements for each presentation. These are turned in at the end of the presentation and then attached to the evaluation form completed by the instructor.

The student who makes the presentation should not be the only one who is engaged and learning. Therefore, you should measure the learning that occurs among the audience. This helps to indicate to the student presenters the effectiveness of their efforts. It is sometimes worthwhile to base at least a portion of the presenter’s grade on how much the other students learned. Remember, what gets measured gets done, and most students value those measurements (i.e., grades) highly.

Deliver praise for student presentations in public, and give constructive criticism in private. This way of delivering feedback is part of creating a supportive environment. Keep in mind that such an environment increases students’ retention of the material they have already presented, as well as what they have heard their fellow students present. It also contributes to the enhancement of student efficacy and self-esteem.
Finally, remember that nearly any good idea can be overdone. Unless yours is a public speaking course, resist the increasingly common tendency, especially in graduate courses, to have students learn the majority of the course content through various types of presentations. Consumer-oriented students are likely to perceive that such an arrangement denies them access to the expertise of a professor for whom they invested considerable time and financial resources.

**Strategic Use of Experiential Learning**

For decades, occupational programs have placed students in internships and externships, jobs in actual work settings, to link course content to the demands of the real world. Many can attest to the learning value of those experiences and to the accompanying opportunities they provided to make valuable career-building contacts. Experiential learning is highly motivating to many students and offers them a rich opportunity to develop the higher-level skills of Bloom’s taxonomy. It has the potential to change students’ perceptions of their communities and their roles within them, and it assuredly helps participants make informed career and lifestyle decisions. This section briefly introduces experiential learning, which includes not only internships and externships but also fieldwork and service learning. In all of these experiences, students direct their own learning outside the classroom, while the professor assumes the role of resource and mentor.

In the late 1960s, when student idealism led to the demand for increased relevancy in higher education, various types of experiential learning projects became a significant part of the curriculum in many discipline areas. Now called "service learning," that practice has returned in full force to most campuses—holding promise for the inspired Millennial Generation members to contribute to the betterment of many entities. Campus Compact—an organization whose mission is to assist institutions of higher education in providing young people with the values, skills, and knowledge of active citizenship—promotes service learning as the most recognized and effective teaching method available to help students become active responsible citizens. Service learning exposes students to the needs of the larger society, engages them in addressing those needs through community service, and connects what they learn in the classroom to real-world situations. At its best, service learning is a powerful teaching method that allows students to reflect why such conditions exist and what their democratic responsibilities are in addressing them. A study by the Higher Education Research Institute comparing service participants with nonparticipants showed that participation in community service positively influenced every one of the thirty-five measured student outcomes, which fell into the broad categories of academic development, civic values, and life skills (Astin, 2000).

The challenge with experiential learning lies in ensuring the legitimate role of each experience in achieving predetermined learning objectives. While students will value the independence and the personal satisfaction they receive from
internships or fieldwork, we must strive to ensure what they learn is transferable to an even wider arena. Thus, the instructor must not only select sound learning activities carefully but also build reflection and analysis into the learning experience.

If you plan to include experiential learning projects in your class, a tool that you should strongly consider using is the *contract*—a written document that spells out the pertinent issues and responsibilities of the student and professor, and is signed by both parties. Generating a contract generally involves a three-step procedure:

1. Develop the parameters of the experience. These include the product that you expect students to generate (e.g., a reaction paper, a journal, a video oral report), its evaluation criteria, and related logistical requirements. Provide a printed copy for each student, along with a list of possible topics.

2. Create a proposal form that students will submit for your review before actually beginning the experience. This form will give you the opportunity to provide direction and minimize the chances that the experience will be nothing more than wasted time.

3. Return the proposal, along with your comments, to the student. At this point, the proposal becomes a binding contract. That is, for a certain body of work, submitted according to stated time parameters and performance standards, you agree to award a particular grade.

You might want to consult with others in your department prior to finalizing the contract to ensure that it meets commonly accepted standards of your situation. Even after you have determined their value to students, fieldwork experiences need to be examined for their impact on the overall curriculum and the goals of the department and institution.

Faculty members who choose to involve students in service-learning projects need to develop ways to combine service to the community with student learning in a way that improves both the student and the community. Doing this effectively takes time, effort, and detailed knowledge of the situation into which students will be sent. A growing number of campuses are offering workshops and support for faculty who want to take advantage of this learning strategy.

**Strategic Use of Focused Study Time**

Remember the definition of the strategic learner? Strategic learners are deliberate and conscious. They are mindful of their strengths and weaknesses as learners and of what they must do to be effective and efficient during the learning process. As a professor, you should facilitate your students’ learning by ensuring that they know how to learn and are intentional in their learning. Becoming strategic
learners will serve your students well, both while they are students and throughout the remainder of their lives.

Often, professors say, in one way or another, "Harrumph. You know, nobody ever taught me how to study, and I did okay. By the time students get to college, they should know how to study." We have a number of responses to these sentiments:

- As professors, we are not necessarily typical of the students who are populating our classes. Although some of us were first-generation college students, others of us had college-educated parents who schooled us, directly or indirectly, on how to be effective in college.
- Maybe no one did teach us to study, but what if someone had? How much more could we have learned, and how much more quickly could we have learned it?
- Students may have learned how to study before they got to college, but college is different from high school. Also, general study techniques may not be sufficient for the type of learning students need to do in a given specialty. Should we not do everything we possibly can to ensure the learning of the students we have, even if this means including letting them in on the secrets we possess about learning our subject area?

That being said, the following list presents a few student-driven learning methods that will facilitate the focused studying that students do outside of the classroom. Although the instructor does the prep work, the students are responsible for seeing each method through.

- Ask students to keep a study log in which they write down what they are involved in while studying and how long they spend on each task. Tell them that there is a participation grade attached to this activity because you are interested to see what they are doing. Also suggest that if they eventually have some trouble in the course, the diary might help you advise them on different ways to study. The first semester you do this, you can suggest which tasks they should be doing and estimate the time they will take, but after several semesters of collecting actual student logs, particularly of those students who were successful in the course, you can give actual examples.
- An alternative to the study log is the exam log, in which students record what they studied, how they studied, the time they studied, and what they think will be on the exam. Just after the exam, they record how well they believe they did—and why. After the exams are returned, they can reflect on why they scored as they did and why their estimate was on target—or not so close. This is especially effective with younger, lower-division students who may have little practice in studying for difficult exams and in assessing their readiness for an exam.
Complete study sheets as they do the assigned reading. Your work may consist of nothing more than listing chapter objectives and leaving an adequate amount of space for students to list what they find in the reading to amplify each objective. You can collect the study sheets weekly or on exam day. Once the exams are graded, you can compare—and encourage the students to compare—the study sheets of those who did well on the exam and those who did not do well. The differences may be plain to see.

Have students complete a “wonder, interpret, tie-in” (WIT) sheet while they are reading. Students write down concepts, words, or facts that make them wonder; they write down their interpretation of at least one idea presented by the author; and they make statements about how what they are reading ties in with other concepts from the class. In class, students can form small groups to talk about what is on their WIT sheets.

Require students to do what Russ Moulds (1997) calls “interactive annotations.” Students may highlight and underline their text, but they must also go further and add meaningful margin notes where they interact with the author—arguing, commenting, reflecting, asking, agreeing, referring to other portions of the text or other sources, making connections with personal experience, reacting, comparing, and so on. Students can turn in their whole textbook so that you can read through and check their annotations. It is a heavy workload, but to avoid having to carry all the books on any one particular day, you can stagger due dates, do all the checking in class, or use some other alternative.

The time you spend helping your students learn represents an investment in their future success. You will be repaid, with interest, but larger dividends also accrue—for the students as they move through college, and for society as these students move on from college to work, and beyond.

Summary of Key Points

- Resist the trap of teaching only as you have been taught yourself. Today’s students are likely to possess a knowledge base on which you can build through student-driven learning methods.
- Work to convince students that active learning carries many benefits to them.
- For classroom discussions, use small groups until students attain a satisfactory comfort level.
- Use collaborative/cooperative learning techniques to enable students to effectively process and apply material from your presentations.
- Employ role-playing to enable students to understand diverse perspectives.
- Experiment with experiential learning initiatives to increase student engagement and higher-order learning.
- Integrate student presentations into your course to increase students’ retention of material and to build their self-esteem.
- Plan to teach students how to become strategic learners. Doing so fosters their learning efficacy, which benefits them in your course and in their future learning.

Through the Professors’ Eyes

DALE: All this emphasis on student-centered learning is interesting, but most of my students don’t want to teach themselves. They expect me to teach them what they need to know, and I am very comfortable with that. After all, that is my job as a teacher—to direct them to what is important to learn. I also like an efficient classroom and don’t like to waste my time or the students’ time. A couple of my students have shared their interest in doing a project, and I might explore that option with them. They are mature and very good students and perhaps could do some independent work that might provide an angle for looking at my research and other issues in a new way. I must confess to a bit of an eye-opening experience this week, however. Out of the clear blue, my major adviser, Orwin Luke, called me. We hadn’t spoken for nearly ten years. He’s getting ready to retire and, of all things, has joined the Peace Corps! He put up with a lot of my bravado in graduate school, and once he came to my defense when it looked like I might be washed out of the doctoral program. The conversation we had this week has been rattling around in my mind, and it has me asking myself some pretty profound questions.

KIM: There is a great deal of interest within my department for using group work in instruction. In my culture, groups are used a great deal, but we tend to be very guarded about that type of work. Those working in a group would be ostracized for sharing insights and conclusions achieved within that group. I realize this culture is much more liberal about this issue and am beginning to overcome my resistance to the widespread use of groups in my courses. One advantage of group work is that it takes the pressure off of me to perform and reduces my anxiety over my language skills. The first time I used group work in a class, I was surprised how much the students enjoyed solving the case problem that my mentor had helped me develop. The students were very engaged in solving it. I just walked around helping them clarify the issues. I must admit that I even felt a little guilty that first time, because most students really did not need me to help very much. But they were so engaged and creative! I still need to organize my group projects better so that my students are sure to learn all that I want them to learn. But I think I can make this work. My students seem to like working this way. By listening to discussions in their groups, I am also increasing my own language skills, particularly the idiosyncrasies and the slang the students use so much.
PAT: For many years, I have liked having my students do group work and individual projects. Sharing their work with each other really extends the excitement in the class, boosts their individual confidence, and helps me learn new perspectives from my students. They actually help me keep up-to-date in a number of areas related to what I teach. Most students excel in this format, but those who are prone to slacking must be managed. I use peer evaluation in which each team member allocates a given number of points to each of the other members of the group. That really reins in the few who might otherwise take advantage of the efforts of strong students and also motivates them to get involved in the early planning of group projects. Many potential slackers have turned out to really develop a liking for the course material. My students increasingly view my classes as a learning community, not just a place to sit and listen.

**Tips for Thriving**

This chapter has offered information on only a few of the widely used student-directed learning methods. There are dozens of additional tactics and strategies available for enabling students to “discover” things worth learning. Many of these are activities that students can complete in a relatively short amount of time but that can add considerable flavor to your course.

Besides being the manager of the context of the class you deliver, you may find that your greatest role is that of champion of your discipline. Your passion and creativity are the sparks that ignite the fuel of your students’ minds. When you demonstrate that fact genuinely and persistently, your students will become far more effectively self-directed than you ever could have imagined.

**SUGGESTED READINGS**


APPENDIX 8.1

Circle of Knowledge

The Circle of Knowledge (Dunn and Dunn, 1999) is a highly motivating small group strategy for reinforcing learning of factual material, prior to moving to upper levels of Bloom’s taxonomy. The steps are as follows:

1. Divide students into teams of three or four, and distribute the teams throughout the classroom.
2. Pose a brainstorming question to the teams (e.g., list countries in Asia), providing a specific time frame between two and three minutes (e.g., two minutes, thirty-five seconds) for completion of the task.
3. Taking turns and moving clockwise, each team member is to whisper to teammates an answer that meets the criteria of the question.
4. One member is designated as the recorder, using paper and pencil to record each response.
5. The recorder participates as a member and provides responses in his or her turn.
6. No member may skip a turn or give more than one answer in a turn.
7. If a member becomes stumped, teammates are allowed to draw or to act out an acceptable response, but not to say it out loud or write it.
8. Progress cannot continue unless each member satisfies his or her obligation to whisper an answer not already on the growing list.
9. At the end of the predetermined time, the facilitator calls a halt and makes all recorders put down their pencils.
10. Using a board or an overhead projector, the facilitator writes each team’s number at the top of a column.
11. The first team’s recorder calls out an answer. The facilitator writes this answer in that team’s column.
12. On each team, the recorder should then scratch out that answer from his or her team’s list, to avoid a possible penalty as the activity progresses.
13. After the last team calls out its answer for the master list, a new round begins.
   The team that went last in round one goes first in round two, and so on.
14. A team may call out only those answers that appear on its list.
15. When a team runs out of answers on its list, it calls out “Pass” but should stay active in the game.
16. All team members should watch the master list as it builds. If an answer is given that essentially matches another answer already on the board, or is an incorrect fit with the criteria, anyone may yell out “Challenge.”

17. If the facilitator determines that the challenge is valid, the challenging team receives a bonus point (written at the top of the team column), and the team providing the duplicate or incorrect answer is denied credit for the answer.

18. If the facilitator determines that the challenge is incorrect, the challenging team is penalized one point (written at the top of the team column).

19. The rounds finish when all teams have passed. Each group may then discuss missing correct answers, and the first team to call out a missing correct answer is given one additional point.

20. The game is concluded, and the facilitator tallies the points for each team—correct answers, plus challenge points, minus penalty points—in full view of the teams. The winning team is the one with the most net points.