Student Engagement Techniques

Three facets of student engagement that make for strong course delivery. These are:

- Student-instructor interaction
- Student-student interaction
- Student-content interaction

Instructors can foster these interactions in a variety of ways through the course, especially by attending to them directly in course planning.

Each of the techniques suggested below can be modified to engage one or more of the facets of student engagement listed above.

- Imagine what a good interaction will look like. Describe it to yourself. Provide it for your students as an expectation. Have them engage in a similar exercise at the beginning of the course. Discuss how your expectations and their expectations can overlap/coincide as a guideline for ways you will engage during the semester. Be sure to write this down.
- Use Live Chat. Appoint a different student each class period to be the "proxy" for the chat.
- Use discussion boards and interact with students to encourage and re-direct comments.
- Use small breakout groups in class. Encourage students to bring devices and headphones with mics. Have them log in to the Collaborate or Zoom session for the class and work with their classmates who may be away from the physical class that class session.
- If you have asynchronous, online students, engage them in discussion groups where you interact with them periodically.
- Use live polling in Collaborate or Zoom.
- Use "Yes. And…." Revise this technique from Improv Theater to encourage students to respond to one another. You may also want to borrow this technique for yourself in responding to students. One student makes an observation about the material, the next student must begin with "yes." Followed by "and" as a way to add or to redirect the conversation.
- Encourage students to co-create content for the course with peer review of that content. One way to do this is to present information that students will need to be able to recall later. Have students design slides to present portions of that content (assign portions to different groups). Give them an end point at which they will share their slides (1-2) with another group. The second group can review and provide comments and suggestions. These slides can then be shared as content for the course, especially if students complete them in teams and share them at the beginning of the class period. These can be shared in Teams or Blackboard if students in the class struggle with access to Google Suite programs.
- Consider Peer Instruction as described in this article by Catherine Crouch and Eric Mazur or as laid out here.
- Groups of students may be able to share a document in which they take notes for the class session. Encourage them to do so, and check the notes to see what they're getting and what they're missing.
- Bring in a guest speaker using Zoom or Collaborate.
- Use graphics periodically such as sketch notes, as students may be able to provide help with these. Even visual process maps can add interest. Presenting important information visually can also be an assignment for individuals or groups.
- Try an Easter Egg. Easter Eggs are hidden bits of content, sometimes graphics, that instructors might embed in a lecturette or a reading and then ask students for later. Sometimes the Easter Egg represents a helpful note for completing an assignment. Sometimes they are simply fun. Asking students to find the Easter Egg gives students something to listen or look for that they can use later. These can also work well for attendance-taking if the student has to report finding the Egg for the day.
- Take a stretch break.
- Use a reflection question regarding the content to generate discussion.
- Provide a "muddiest point" or "I have questions about…" discussion thread. Check it, and respond either in class or in writing.