

Tips for Teaching to a Diverse Student Body

As community college instructors, we have the privilege, and sometimes challenge, of teaching to a very diverse student population. Students attend a community college under various circumstances with various levels of preparedness and motivation:

some students plan to transfer to a four year institution, while others need to upgrade skills

some have full-time jobs and families, while others come straight from high school

some speak English as a second (or third) language

Regardless, this diverse student body requires that faculty have a variety of teaching strategies and techniques available in their teaching toolbox. Consequently, you may find the following tips, adopted from The Chronicle of Higher Education, helpful.

Keep in mind what it was like to learn a new subject for the first time and craft exams and assignments appropriately. For instance, lengthy essay exams might not be appropriate for freshmen or sophomores.

Share your expectations with your students and find out what they anticipate learning in your class. To learn more about your students' experiences and expectations, administer a Bio Sheet on the first day of class. (For more information on Bio Sheets, see the CTE's website at <http://www.lcc.edu/cte/resources/teachingtips/tip27.html>) From the first day, be clear regarding your policies on tardiness, late assignments, makeup exams, etc. Refer to these policies when there are questions.

Find out what technology applications fit with your teaching style and your students' preferences, and take advantage of training to become proficient at using the technology.

Be mindful of your students' responsibilities such as full-time jobs, families, long commutes, etc., and if possible, consider making some course material accessible online so that students can easily access 24/7.

On a regular basis, ask your students for feedback regarding what is helping and what is hindering their learning through classroom assessment techniques such as the One Minute Paper. This reinforces the process of asking for and giving constructive feedback. For more information on One Minute Papers, see the CTE's website at <http://www.lcc.edu/cte/resources/onlineworkshops/studentfeedback/lesson2-2-1.html> . Additionally, after each class or unit, take notes on what worked well and what didn't. These notes make it much easier to make modifications when you teach the subject again.

Be aware of the following services which are available to assist students at LCC: Counseling and Advising, Tutoring Services, Disability Support Services, the Center for International & Intercultural Education, Student Life and Leadership, the Women's Resource Center, the Liberal Studies Academic Resource Center (LSARC), the Writing Center, and Library Information Services, to mention a few. If applicable, you might even invite someone from these areas to come and speak to your class about their services.

Help your students see the relevance of the subject matter. Better yet, ask them how a given topic relates to their life.

Requiring them to find applications outside of the classroom reinforces what they are learning.

Consider requiring, or strongly encouraging, your students to meet with you one-on-one at least once during the semester. If students find office hours intimidating, hold some of your office hours in the cafeteria or the local coffee shop. This meeting can be very beneficial to students who might be reluctant to ask questions in class and/or who are having difficulty with assignments or exams.

Reference

<http://www.lansing.cc.mi.us/cte/resources/>

Fogg, Piper. "A Dozen Teaching Tips for Diverse Classrooms." <http://chronicle.com>. 26 Oct. 2007. 7 July 2008
<<http://chronicle.com/weekly/v54/i09/09b01201.htm>>.
<http://www.lansing.cc.mi.us/cte/resources/>