

Engage Students for Enhanced Learning and Satisfaction

Kenneth L. Knight, Editor

Brigham Young University, Provo, UT

Although unplanned, the theme of engaging students to enhance their learning runs through this issue. It plays out in the articles by Michele Monaco and Malissa Martin on the millennial student¹ and in Kim Peer's engagement theory² manuscript. It also runs through two reviews in our new column "Current Literature Reviews" coordinated by Carrie Myer.³

Higher education is in the midst of a paradigm shift – from teacher-centered (teacher delivery) to student-centered (student learning).¹ Students want more relevancy. Parents, administrators, and regional accreditation bodies are demanding outcome measures of student learning. But most importantly, students learn better when they are engaged with the content.

In their discussion of the many unique aspects of Generation Y, or Millennial students, Monaco and Martin¹ advocated the use of learning-centered syllabi to more effectively reach these students. A learning-centered syllabi helps students understand in depth – on the first day – what the course is going to cover, what is expected of them, and how they can get the most from the class. In Monaco and Martin's words, it "provides direction for course assignments, expectations of student behavior, and outlines rules and regulations with ramifications if not followed."¹ It helps students "decide for themselves how to engage for academic success."¹

In addition to the references provided by Monaco and Martin (in Table 2) a Google search will result in 100's of references, some to books, but other helpful online resources. The following are 3 that I found particularly useful:

- 6 Steps to Building a Syllabus:
http://www.4faculty.org/Demo/read2_main.htm,
- Components of a Learner-Centered Syllabus:
http://www.cccu.org/resourcecenter/resID.2210,parentCatID.220/rc_detail.asp,
- Designing a Learner-centered Syllabus:
<http://cte.udel.edu/syllabus.htm>.

Peer² also stresses the importance of engaging students in the learning process and points out that learner-centered functions have been grouped together as *engagement theory*. She suggests that engagement theory should be at the center of a program's self-analysis and planning for improvement.

The faculty inventory Peer used to study quality, or good practice indicators of engagement theory, can be used by faculty for self-analysis. I endorse her suggestion that faculty periodically reflect on their teaching by taking and analyzing their instructional

behaviors "to determine if they are using strategies and techniques that promote engagement."² Doing so provides continuous quality improvement of both individual faculty and the program.

Concept mapping is a simple and quick concept to encourage students' critical thinking and help you evaluate their learning.³ It can be used for team building by having small groups of students complete the exercise. It also is a terrific strategy for clinical instructors. I can't wait for fall semester so I can use this in my classes.

I wrote in the last issue about the importance of maximizing student learning and that our class organization and presentation should be geared to that end.⁴ Using learning-centered syllabi, self-analysis of the application of engagement theory in teaching, and concept mapping are valuable strategies in maximizing student learning. Use them.

References

1. Monaco M, Martin M. The Millennial Student: A New Generation of Learner. *Athletic Train Ed J*. 2007;2:42-46.
2. Peer KS. Engagement Theory in Action: An Investigation of Athletic Training Program Directors *Athletic Train Ed J*. 2007;2:49-55.
3. Meyer C. Current Literature Reviews. *Athletic Train Ed J*. 2007;2:58-59.
4. Knight, KL..It's All About Students . . . Learning. *Athletic Train Ed J*. 2007;2:3.