

# Classroom Resources

## For Retention and Student Success

While the retention of students is often viewed as a central institutional concern, the practices and processes contributing to student retention are clearly and unequivocally shared throughout the institution. Given their role, faculty members and instructors are among the most vital contributors to the successful retention of students. This document will briefly highlight ways that faculty members and instructors can have an impact on student retention in their classrooms and in their interactions with students.

Retention and student success literature consistently emphasize that students persist and graduate in environments that foster learning. A university campus surrounds students with a vast array of learning opportunities, both in and out of the classroom. Students who become engaged in these opportunities and feel that they are continually learning are more likely to stay and persist to the next year.

In particular, students who are actively involved in learning, that is who spend more time on task especially with others, are more likely to learn and, in turn more likely to stay (Tinto, 1997). The most crucial individual to encourage involvement in learning is the classroom instructor.

The following ideas/suggestions are a summary of “best teaching practices” that support student success, retention and persistence to graduation.

### Faculty/Student Interaction

1. Learn as many names of students as possible, and use their names in class.
2. Introduce yourself and tell the students by what name and title you prefer to be called.
3. Have students fill out 3x5 cards with their name, contact phone, and other personal information you think is important.
4. Call students or send e-mails if they are absent. Make appointments with them to discuss attendance, make-up work, etc.
5. At the end of each class period, ask one student to stay for a minute to chat. (Compliment his or her perceptive question, ask for feedback, etc.)
6. Get feedback periodically from students using a whole class, small group, or individual assessment. Conduct a personal interview with each student sometime during the semester.
7. Provide positive reinforcement whenever possible. By using a “lateral thinking technique” (adding to ideas, rather than dismissing them), you can help students feel that their ideas, comments, and opinions are worthwhile.
8. Interact with students outside of the classroom. Say “hello” as you see them on campus, walk with them between classes, and if your “style” and time permits, attend activities such as student activities or performances.
9. Lend some of your reference books to students. You can initiate the process by saying, “I’ve just read a great book on \_\_\_\_\_. Would anyone like to borrow it?”
10. Use your first class meeting to help the students get to know each other, as well as you. Have the students establish a “partner” system for absences, work missed, assignments, etc. Have students exchange cell phone numbers, My Space sites, contact information, etc.

According to Richard Light, “[A student’s] job is to get to know one faculty member reasonably well this semester, and also to have that faculty member get to know [that student] reasonably well” (Light, 2001).

## **Classroom Environment and Curriculum**

1. Personalize classes by finding unique ways to encourage individual participation and group collaborations. Suggestions include assigning class debates based on course topics, encouraging collaborative homework assignments and projects, building peer reviews/feedback into written homework assignments, and incorporating small study groups as part of course culture.
2. Utilize multiple strategies in engaging students by offering perspective beyond disciplinary boundaries, connecting with other subjects, asking students to think about topics from perspectives they will have as professionals, facilitating opportunities for students to participate in research, and providing early and frequent opportunities for feedback through regular assignments and quizzes.
3. Encourage students to visit both academic and career advisors often.
4. Give each student a mid-term grade and indicate what each student must do improve.
5. Make students aware that attendance in the course is vital to their success. Explain your attendance policy to students orally and in writing.
6. List and discuss your course objectives on the first day. Review these objectives periodically throughout the semester to remind students of the course purpose and direction.
7. Put the course objectives in the context of the student goals. Ask how the objectives fit their personal/ career goals.
8. Let students know that the learning resources you use in class are available outside the class. Be sure students know how to access these resources (Blackboard, course reserves, etc.).

## **Resources**

Light, Richard, *Making the Most of College: Students Speak Their Minds*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001.

Tinto, Vincent, "Principles of Effective Retention," *Journal of the Freshman Year Experience*, 1990: 2(1), pp. 35-48.

Tinto, Vincent, "Promoting Retention Through Classroom Practice," Paper Presented at *Enhancing Student Retention: Using International Policy and Practice* Conference, Amsterdam, Nov. 5-7, 2003. Accessible at [http://www.staffs.ac.uk/access-studies/docs/Amster-paperVT\(1\).pdf](http://www.staffs.ac.uk/access-studies/docs/Amster-paperVT(1).pdf).

Tinto, Vincent, "Classrooms as Communities: Exploring the Educational Character of Student Persistence," *Journal of Higher Education*, 1997:68(6) (November/December), pp. 599-623.

<http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/assess-1.htm>

An excerpt from the Classroom Assessment Techniques (CAT) handbook on the purpose and assumptions underlying classroom assessment.

<http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/teachtip.htm>

Extensive teaching tips site with information on all areas of effective teaching and curriculum.

[http://www.usu.edu/faculty\\_development/](http://www.usu.edu/faculty_development/)—Utah State University site for faculty development in all areas.