increased enjoyment, appreciation and learning.

May the articles in this collection help you develop your teaching practice. And may you, in turn, become a resource for others.

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Chapter 1: The Start of a Successful Semester

Don't Waste First Days

By Kevin Brown, Lee University, Tennessee

Despite the fact that numerous articles have been written on the importance of the first day, too many of us still use it to do little more than go over the syllabus and review basic guidelines for the course. This year I decided to try a different approach, and the results were much more dramatic than I expected. I taught real material on the first day. Despite that, there have been fewer questions about course policies, with some students actually referencing them without even a mention from me. Let me explain how I achieved these results.

On the first day (I used this approach in all my courses), I spent the majority of the time teaching content that related to the overall ideas of the course. Thus, in Freshman Composition, a course that focuses on experiential learning, I had the students go outside and experience a brief period of blindness. They took turns taping cotton balls over their eyes and leading each other around. We then analyzed the experience and talked about how one might craft a thesis to describe what happened. In a Western literature class, I introduced the major ideas of the Enlightenment and talked about how the interplay of reason and emotion would reoccur throughout the course.

Only after this exposure to course content did I give students a copy of the syllabus. Rather than going through it in detail, I told students that they were perfectly capable of reading it. I think we should start assuming that students in courses ranging from developmental to upper-division major classes can read and understand a syllabus. Rather than treating the syllabus as something special, I decided to handle it as another reading assignment.

To prepare students for this reading assignment, I did a brief presentation (I used PowerPoint this year, which I almost never use) on the most important aspects of the syllabus: why students are taking the course, how to get in touch with me, our university's mission statement, academic support for those with disabilities, how to access the online readings, and the overall structure of the class. I limited the presentation to 10 minutes. I have even begun to wonder if I could skip handing out the syllabus altogether and simply have students print it off themselves and read it before coming to the first day of class.

On the second day, I had students pick up note cards as they arrived for class. I asked them to write on the card any questions they had about the syllabus. In one class of just over 30 students, I answered fewer than five questions, and it took less than five minutes. Even in my largest class, which had the most questions, I was still able to respond in less than 10 minutes. Thus, my presentation of the syllabus took 15 minutes at most, as opposed to the 40 to 50 minutes it used to take.

I also used bonus questions taken from the syllabus on my reading quizzes. This makes it clear to students who have not read the syllabus that they are losing out on extra points. I have considered giving a quiz solely on the syllabus, as I have heard some professors do, but that seems a bit petty to me. I can see, though, how that approach reinforces the idea of treating the syllabus as class material, just like any other reading assignment.

In the few weeks since the semester started, I have had more students reference policies from the syllabus than I usually have in an entire semester. Students know how many points I deduct for late papers, and two students in one class wanted to discuss our school's mission statement. They asked if I believed we are actually trying to live it out (we are a religious institution), something that has never happened in my eight years of teaching here.

Rather than wasting that all-important first day going over material students can read on their own, I recommend we begin by introducing students to ideas from the course. Almost all of us complain about running out of time by the end of the semester, but a better beginning can help us reclaim at least one day of it, if we use it wisely.

Reprinted from *The Teaching Professor*, 23.9 (2003): 3.

Ten Things to Make First Day (and Rest) of Semester Successful

By Mary C. Clement, Berry College, Georgia

I like to arrive in the classroom well before the students. It gives me time to get things organized. I create an entrance table (I use chairs or desks if there's no table) that holds handouts for students to pick up. From day one the students learn the routine: they arrive, pick up handouts from the entrance table, and read the screen for instructions. They know what to do, and it saves time. Here's how I recommend introducing the routine on day one:

1. Post your name and the name and section of the class on the screen so that when students walk in they know that they are in the right place.
2. Write "welcome" on the screen and have directions that tell students what they need to do immediately. Example: "As you enter, please tell me your name. Then pick up a syllabus, a card, and a folder from the entrance table. Fold the card so that it will stand on your desk, and write your first name on it in BIG letters. Add your last name and major in smaller print. Write your name on the tab of the folder (last name first, then first name). Read the syllabus until class starts." *Note: By asking students to tell you their name as they enter, you can hear how the name is pronounced and avoid the embarrassment of pronouncing it for the first time yourself.*
3. When it's time for class to start—start class! Late arrivals can catch up by reading the screen.
4. For classes of 25 or fewer, I have students do brief, 10-second introductions. I tell them there will be a verbal quiz after all the introductions and that they can win stars if they know who is who. (Have fun with this, but remember that these are adults and college is not like junior high.)

5. For larger classes, I have students introduce themselves to three or four people around them, and then we might do "stand-ups"—stand up if you are a Spanish major, stand up if you are an education major, and so on. I explain that students need to know each other for our small-group work and in case they have a question.
6. I collect the file folders and put them alphabetically by student name into a big plastic carrying case. When students need to turn in assignments, they find the box on the entrance table, and they put their papers in their respective folders. When papers are graded, they can pull their graded tests or assignments from their folders. The beauty of this system is that time is never wasted by passing out papers. For small classes, I put handouts in the folders of absent students.
7. After the introductions and the explanation of the folder and box system, I turn to the "Today we will" list that I've written on the board, posted on a large paper flip chart, or projected on the screen. I like to actually write this list on the board so I can return to it even while projecting my notes. A Today-we-will list outlines my plan for the day. For example, for the first day, my list says:
   - See screen for instructions for card and folder
   - Introductions
   - Turn in folders
   - Go over syllabus completely
   - Mini-lecture on ___________
   - Interest inventory
   - Do you know what to read/do before the next class?

[Note: The Today-we-will list lets me walk around the room, teach from the projection system, and then look at the list for what I should do next. I tend not to forget things if I have the list. As the semester progresses, the Today-we-will list might contain warm-up questions that then appear as test questions. The list helps students who arrive late or leave early see what they have missed.]

8. For the mini-lesson/mini-lecture—whether it's a short overview of the first reading assignment, some sample problems, or 10 interesting questions students will be able to answer at the end of the course—I strongly recommend doing some course content on the first day. For classes that last longer than 50 minutes, I include a short student activity. I also think it's important to begin with course material on day one so that students begin to see who you are and how you teach. Since I teach courses in teacher education, I often talk about my

teaching career. I include a few stories about how times have changed and about how some things in teaching never change.

9. Interest inventories are great for the first day of class. An interest inventory is just a short list of questions about students' backgrounds and interests. It may assess their prior learning as well. In addition to name and major, students can write about a hobby, interest, or goal. Do not be too personal. You can have them answer several questions about content—maybe solve a problem, write a short paragraph, or answer specific questions. Finally, open-ended questions are useful:
   - What are your goals after graduation?
   - What has a teacher done in the past that helped you learn ________?
   - Is there anything else that you want me to know about you and your course of study?

   You can always add one fun question:
   - If your song played when you entered the room, what would that song be?

10. Every good class has an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. I usually teach the mini-lesson and then save the last six to eight minutes of class for the interest inventory and individual questions. This way, students don't have to wait on others to finish. I instruct students to turn in their interest inventory as they exit. As they are writing, I alphabetize their folders and put them in the box on the table. Another good closing is to ask whether they know what to read/do before the next class and whether they know three people to ask about the assignment if they have a question.

Reprinted from *The Teaching Professor*, 21.7 (2007): 1.

Critical Connections for First Days of Class

By Joe Kreizinger, Northwest Missouri State University, Missouri

If you typically use most of each opening class session reviewing your course syllabus but seek a more engaging alternative, let me suggest focusing your first lesson on "making connections" rather than "giving directions." The three "critical connections" I emphasize on opening day are (1) **connecting students to instructor**, (2) **connecting instructor to content**, and (3) **connecting content to students**. By focusing on these connections (and saving the syllabus for the second day of class), I aim to create a positive and productive working relationship with my students right from the start and, perhaps most important, to awaken in them early an awareness of the benefits of engaging with the subject matter.

After brief welcomes and opening remarks, I draw three circles on the board and connect them with arrows that suggest a continuous cycle. I write one of the three critical connecters ("me," "you," and "content") in each of the circles. After a brief explanation and preview of the three critical connections, I make an initial personal connection with the class by sharing a bit about myself.

When class size allows, I use a variety of icebreaker activities to connect individual students with one another and with me. I also establish an initial personal connection by collecting information on each student. I distribute a sheet near the end of the first class and ask students to return it next class. It requests basic demographic information but also gives students the opportunity to share more personal information if they choose (e.g., favorites, hobbies, etc.). Using bits of that information later in the course can enhance the personal connections first made during the opening session.

Once I have established this first critical connection (students to instructor), I segue into the second—connecting myself to the content. My primary objectives here are to build credibility, demonstrate interest in and

enthusiasm for the content area, and show how the content has been significant to me. I may discuss my research in the area (building credibility) and highlight conferences I've recently attended (showing enthusiasm). I talk about how the content has aided my growth as an educator. I extend beyond my professional life and discuss how this content is useful in my personal life. As an example, in a basic communication course that I teach, I show students how the content may enhance interpersonal relationships, group interactions, and perhaps even self-understanding. I know that most instructors have deep passion for their content areas, but sometimes they fail to communicate that passion in a tangible way. Of the three critical connections I suggest, this one seems to be most often neglected.

By your describing how this content connects with you, it may be easier for students to start to develop similar connections themselves. I don't expect that all my students will find personal relevance on the first day, but you can't expect the connection to develop if it isn't even explored. If students understand how they can make use of the content, they may become better engaged, and I hope they will develop a greater sense of ownership of their education.

In my basic communication course, for instance, I share statistics that illustrate how greatly potential employers value the very communication skills students will be developing in class, and I discuss in very simple terms some of the specific skills we will address and when and where they might be applied in students' personal lives.

I end my opening day by asking students to brainstorm potential benefits that may come from study in the discipline. Following that discussion, I ask each student to write on the back of the "student information sheet" (discussed above) three or more specific ways the content of this course may benefit him or her personally. At the second session, I review some of those benefits.

Even though it takes a bit of time, I have found that placing some emphasis on making connections rather than giving directions on the opening day of class changes student attitudes. They are more positive toward the subject matter and often toward the class in general. Their overall experiences seem to be more productive as well.

Reprinted from *The Teaching Professor*, 20.5 (2006): 1.

'Warming' Climate for Learning

By Sandra Allen, Columbia College Chicago, Illinois

When educators talk about climate, they don't mean global warming. In academic circles, climate refers to the atmosphere of warmth existing between the teacher and the students. Much research suggests that few other factors produce a more lasting impact on learning than the professor's approval or disapproval of the student's work and their in-class interactions.

So, how do we go about climate change? With trial and error and a dollop of research, I've identified three aspects that seem key to creating a "warm" climate for learning: (1) the teacher's praise or approval, (2) enthusiasm for and use of students' own ideas, and (3) teacher-student interaction. To be effective in facilitating student learning, I recommend that we use all three. In fact, praise alone does not definitively correlate with improved student learning.

Praise

Offering praise and approval doesn't mean avoiding messages that let students know when their work doesn't meet acceptable standards. In fact, recent studies show that students want specifics about their performance—not bland, ambiguous feedback, which can actually disrupt student learning. One survey of 100 students found that 70 percent saw their professors as the best source of written or face-to-face feedback on relevant tasks and assignments.

Enthusiasm

In my classroom, I've found that enthusiasm for and use of students' own ideas is contagious. When the teacher gives concrete evidence of valuing a student's diverse approaches—to, say, problem solving—that creates an energy that makes all students more attentive and cooperative. Here are four techniques I use to generate enthusiasm for student ideas. First, ac-

knowledge what students contribute to the discussion.

When appropriate, I point out that their solution to a problem or insight into an issue represents a new twist, maybe even one I have not thought of previously. Second, I modify or rephrase the ideas into concepts that serve as springboards to new material. Next, I compare student ideas by connecting the dots between their thoughts. And finally, I summarize what was said by an individual or a group of students, stating how it applies to the course content.

Another way to more proactively use students' ideas is to solicit their opinions on course content and teaching style. Rare is the student who hesitates to give an opinion anonymously, as those end-of-course comments on rating forms clearly indicate. However, those assessments come after the fact and don't necessarily help the teacher change if the approach in the current course is off. Among the many ways to gather student feedback, the one I prefer is simple, cheap, and easy.

I distribute a three-by-five-inch index card to each student in class a few weeks before midterm. I ask them to write two or three things they have learned so far on one side of the card and to indicate what gets in their way of learning on the other side. After collecting and reviewing this anonymous feedback, I tell students what I learned and what I'm doing (or will do) about it. My response to their feedback lets them know that I value their opinions. I recommend repeating the process again three or so weeks before the final. It's always an enlightening experience to compare the two sets of student responses.

Interaction

Characteristics of successful student-teacher interactions include both verbal techniques that hold student interest and the teacher's physical gestures or movement in the classroom. Being savvy about what's going on verbally and nonverbally with students goes beyond positively responding to student ideas. It gives the teacher the ability to interpret and respond to the classroom dynamic in real time.

Long story short: get out from behind that desk, and move around the room as you talk. Remember: body language is part of a professor's message. Moving among students has the added benefit of identifying those who are busy text messaging and/or using their laptop to refine their lists of friends on Myspace.

It's not a stretch to conclude that a vibrant classroom climate is important to enhancing student attitudes toward the teacher and, by extension, to

acquiring the skills and knowledge of the course. Praise by itself might be counterproductive, but it becomes a potent motivational force in the classroom when combined with enthusiasm for student ideas and interaction with the students. Those three together improve teaching and enhance learning outcomes.

Reprinted from *The Teaching Professor*, 22.2 (2008): 1.

Should Students Have a Role in Setting Course Goals?

By Maryellen Weimer, Penn State Berks, Pennsylvania

Maybe ... but then if you ask students what they want to get out of a course, most give the same depressing answer: an A (never mind whether learning accompanies the grade). If you rephrase and ask why students are taking your course, those answers are just as enervating: nothing else was open at the time; it's in the same room as my previous course; my fraternity has copies of your exams on file; my boyfriend's in this class; I heard you were easy; I heard you were funny; your textbook's the cheapest one; or, my favorite on Lucy Benjamin's list, "because my mother took this class from you 24 years ago, and she said I could use her notes." (p. 147)

Do answers like these make those who would give students a role in setting course goals dreamy optimists? Perhaps, but maybe there's another kind of question that we should ask: How did students arrive at this dismal approach to selecting courses? Surely they were not born wanting so little from their education. What experiences could have so disconnected them from classroom learning? Has the educational enterprise somehow disenfranchised them?

Those are large questions, and Benjamin's article does not answer them ... at least not directly. Benjamin's interest is in course goals and the disconnect that exists between the goals of faculty and those of students. Moreover, the goals focused on in the article are not the bogus ones students frequently voice, but rather 17 possible goals for an introductory psychology course (some are relevant to that discipline, most are broadly applicable, and all are listed in the article).

Across the years, Benjamin has given the list to faculty and students, asking each group to identify the three most important ones for an introductory course in psychology. "For college teachers, the most frequently mentioned goal is 11 (content). No other goal achieves anything near the consistency of that selection." (p.147)

Not surprisingly, this number one goal for faculty rarely showed up in the students' top three. They rank highest a goal relating to self-knowledge and understanding, followed by one focusing on the development of study and learning skills and a third highlighting social and interpersonal skills.

Benjamin uses the list of goals on the first day of class. At that time a discussion about teacher goals occurs, as well as some discussion about this research documenting that teachers and students frequently do not share the same goals. This is why students are asked to identify their top three goals. The results are shared in the following class session.

Benjamin discusses three ways of responding to student goals. First, take a totally student-centered approach and adopt those goals for the course. This approach is not recommended. Second possibility: compare student and faculty goals and then show students why/how faculty goals are superior. No recommendation here either—why seek input if you have no intention of responding to it?

Benjamin's choice is the third option, in which faculty and student goals are integrated. "Do not misunderstand this compromise strategy. It is not meant to undermine the professor's goals, nor is it meant to give students the impression that their goals will become part of the course when there is no intention on the part of the instructor to do so. ... The purpose of involving students in the process is to create a course that is more meaningful to students and professor, to increase the satisfaction of all involved in the class on both sides of the lectern, and to show students how important it is to become involved in their learning." (p. 148)

The rest of the article then explains how Benjamin incorporates student goals into the course. From work attempting to do this, Benjamin has discovered that most often this does not involve changing course content. "More commonly ... meeting student goals is about making specific linkages between what you teach and how it relates to student goals." (p. 149)

Could it be that students take courses for poor reasons because their goals have been ignored or thoroughly sublimated to those more important instructor goals? It's an interesting question and one that can be pursued pragmatically by using (or revising) the list of course goals contained in this article. It might at least be worth a conversation with students.

Reference: Benjamin, Jr., L.T. (2005). "Setting course goals: Privileges and responsibilities in a world of ideas." *Teaching of Psychology*, 32 (3), 149.

Reprinted from *The Teaching Professor*, 20.10 (2006): 8.

Making Syllabus More than Contract

By Roxanne Cullen, Ferris State University, Michigan

For years I've introduced my course syllabus by saying, "This is your contract for the course." And all too often the document read more like a contract than a true representation of my conceptualization of the course.

So I revised my introductory composition course syllabus in an attempt to create a more learner-centered academic experience. Although these elements have been at the core of my teaching, my syllabus did not necessarily make them explicit or clearly articulate their function to the students. Based on advice I found in several resources regarding the syllabus, I came to see that a teacher needs to consider the ways a syllabus can be useful to students. My goal was to make my syllabus more than the standard contract between my students and me. I wanted it to become a tool for learning.

I began by analyzing my syllabus using a rubric that I developed with a colleague based upon principles of learner-centered pedagogy. The original design of the rubric was as a tool for administrators to determine the degree of learner-centeredness in a department or unit based upon a review of course syllabi. In this case I simply applied the rubric to my own syllabus.

The rubric has three main categories, each with several subcategories. The main category, **Community,** includes subcategories that relate to the accessibility of the teacher, the presence of learning rationale, and evidence of collaboration. In the category **Power and Control**, the subcategories focus on teacher role and student role, use of outside resources, and the general focus of the syllabus: Does it focus on policies and procedures, or is it weighted toward student learning outcomes? Is there opportunity for negotiation of policies, procedures, assignment choice, and the like? And finally, in the category **Evaluation and Assessment**, the subcategories examine the use of grades, the feedback mechanisms employed, types of evaluation, learning outcomes, and opportunities for revising or redoing assignments.

A review of my syllabus inspired me to revise. I made several changes to emphasize the concept of community. Although I have always provided rationales for assignments when I talked about them in class, I added a rationale statement for assignments in the syllabus. I also provided rationales for all policies and procedures so that they would look less like arbitrary laws set down by the teacher and more as though they served enhanced learning.

I also incorporated more teamwork and collaborative projects, again with a rationale tied to learning outcomes. Finally, I made an effort throughout to disclose information about myself, mostly in regard to my experience as a composition teacher and a writer.

The most significant change I made was in the area of power and control. Instead of establishing an attendance policy, class participation rules, or penalties for late work, I indicated that all these would be negotiated by the class. Because the course is populated by first-semester students, I was reluctant to share much more power than that, knowing the propensity of beginning students to underestimate the challenge of college-level work.

My former one-page syllabus was now 10 pages and included a short philosophical statement on learning to write along with writing- and learning-related justifications for every policy and procedure. After all this time and effort, I couldn't bear the thought that students would not read it or would simply listen to me ramble through it the first day of class and then never look at it again.

So, in an effort to make the syllabus a working part of the course in which students discovered for themselves what they needed to know about the course, I had them write their first essay on the syllabus. I asked them to consider things such as their expectations of the class, what they thought my expectations were, what they thought they knew about me, and what their roles and responsibilities included.

I was actually eager to read the essays. In some respects, I felt that my work was being evaluated by the students, which provided an interesting twist on power and control. Their essays became another feedback mechanism for me. Equally if not more interesting was the conversation among the students as they prepared to write. I use WebCT, so I suggested to students that they use the discussion board tool as a prewriting strategy.

The discussion was lively and, I believe, productive. Even students who had been reluctant to participate in class discussions about the syllabus weighed in online with great authority regarding their interpretation of it.

Every syllabus is in some respects a reaction to the previous semester, so like all syllabi, mine is still a work in progress. Most important at this point is the tone my new syllabus has set for the semester.

Making the first essay a response to the syllabus has focused more

thought and time on it than in any of my previous classes. It has served as a catalyst for discussion, for setting goals, and for discussing writing. It has focused our attention on learning and made every aspect of the course intentional. This syllabus is much more than the standard contract between my students and me.

Reprinted from *The Teaching Professor*, 21.9 (2007): 5.

Establishing Relevance

By Jeff Fox, Brigham Young University, Utah

Students frequently wonder and sometimes ask "Why are we doing this? Why do I need to know this? Why are we spending so much time on this? Why do we have to do this busywork?"

When students don't see the connection between the content and activities of the course and their future lives, they question what's happening and what we ask them to do. Research confirms that perceived relevance is a critical factor in maintaining student interest and motivation. It also contributes to higher student ratings on course evaluations.

Three straightforward practices can help faculty establish the relevance of course content and activities: faculty should (1) regularly share and discuss the learning outcomes of the course; (2) clearly tie those learning outcomes to the required activities and assignments; and (3) orient students at the beginning of each class period by discussing the "what, why, and how" of that day.

Learning outcomes—in the syllabus and during class discussions. Clear learning outcomes are the foundation of a learning-centered syllabus and a basic tenet of all instructional design. Many faculty (perhaps with "encouragement" from accreditation commissions) now include course learning outcomes in their syllabi. If you don't, consider doing so. Outcomes help clarify what students will know and do when they complete the course.

Moreover, faculty should do more than just list the learning outcomes. They should also clearly and frequently discuss the relevance of the outcomes with students. Students need to know why the knowledge and skills identified in the learning outcomes are important in their future lives. We know that the content is relevant, but we shouldn't assume students see how it relates to what they will be doing.

Link assignment descriptions and learning outcomes. Most faculty

do not regularly tie the assignments described in the syllabus to the learning outcomes. Faculty may think that the links are obvious to students, but that's not always a valid assumption. Every assignment should be clearly defined in terms of how it should be done, and each assignment should be clearly justified by answering questions such as "How does this assignment relate to the course outcomes? How will this assignment help fulfill them? What should the student be able to know or do better after completing the assignment? Why was this assignment chosen to achieve the learning outcomes?"

For example, I explain to students how the assignments are tied to the learning outcomes and how I designed each assignment to exercise different intellectual skills in Bloom's Taxonomy. When students understand what the assignments are helping them accomplish, they see the assignments' utility and find the work more meaningful.

Establish relevance at the start of every class period. Some faculty members present an outline of the day's material on the board or in a PowerPoint. This is a useful practice that can aid student note taking, but students are even more motivated when the day's content and activities are placed in the context of the course and their lives. Kicking off class with a simple orientation that answers three questions—what? why? and how?—can get students on track, motivate them, and help them put the day's content and activities into context.

- **What?** What are we doing in class today? What questions will we try to answer? What concepts will we address? What questions will we answer? What activities will we do?
- **Why?** Why are we studying this? How are today's content and activities tied to the course learning outcomes? What should I know or be able to do after today's class? How can the information and skills be used in everyday life?
- **How?** How are we going to address the content? Will we use lectures? Activities? Discussions? How will different learning styles be accommodated?

When students understand clearly the value, purpose, and procedures for course activities and the logic by which teachers arrived at their design, they are more likely to see the value of what they are being asked to learn and consequently will participate more fully in the course.

Reprinted from The Teaching Professor, 25.5 (2011): 1.

What Influences Student Attitudes toward Courses?

By Maryellen Weimer, Penn State Berks, Pennsylvania

The first and most obvious answer is the instructor. Much previous research establishes the powerful ways instructors influence how students respond to and in a course. But two researchers wondered whether the instructor was the only factor influencing student attitudes. Drawing from work in their discipline, services marketing and management, they extrapolated seven factors that might be significant determinants of student attitudes. Using a complex statistical model, they tested the seven factors and found that four of them explained 77 percent of the variations in attitude toward the course: instructor, course topic, course execution, and the room (physical environment).

They write of these findings: "An important result is that there are significant factors, in addition to the instructor, at work shaping a student's attitude toward a class that he or she may take. The model shows that course topic has just as strong an influence on attitudes as does the instructor." (p. 144) Only required courses were included in the study. They covered topics about which students had a range of interest, from not being interested at all to the course topic being introductory to a major.

The researchers point out that if the subject matter of a course influences how students relate to a course, then their level of interest ought to be acknowledged as a contributing factor on course evaluations. At this time most course evaluations focus exclusively on instructor-related variables.

Equally interesting in this work are those other factors **not** found to influence student attitudes toward courses. For example, the student him- or herself was not found to significantly contribute toward attitude about the course. The researchers explain why they were surprised by this finding. "Given the emphasis some educators place on encouraging students to take ownership of their education, it was surprising to find that, overall, this

group of students did not see themselves as being instrumental in shaping their own education experience." (p. 146)

What the findings confirm is that students (at least those in this cohort) do not understand that they are at least partially responsible for what happens to them in courses. It seems to reconfirm the extremely passive orientation many students have toward knowledge acquisition.

Also surprising was the fact that other students were not seen as a factor influencing student attitudes. This means that "educators cannot assume that students will automatically appreciate the value of the diverse student population that takes a given college course together." (p. 146)

Finally, in a follow-up analysis that explored some of the factors related to course execution (which these researchers defined as overall design and conduct of the course), there was confirmation for some facts about participation many of us have observed in our individual classrooms. "Students in classes where participation was expected and graded were significantly more likely to prepare for class, attend class, and commit to excellence. Students in those classes where participation was emphasized were also significantly more likely to value the contributions that other students make to their learning experiences." (p. 146)

Reference: Curran, J.M., and Rosen, D.E. (2006). "Student attitudes toward college courses: An examination of influences and intentions." Journal of Marketing Education, 28 (2), 135–148.

Reprinted from The Teaching Professor, 20.10(2006): 4.

Chapter 2: Building Rapport with Students