

FIRST CLASS SESSION IN FACE-TO-FACE CLASSES

Students' experience in the classroom affects many aspects of their college experience including their learning, personal and academic growth, and their feelings of connection, belonging, and satisfaction. Students need to know that faculty are not only proficient in the subject matter, but that they will respect students as individuals, maintain high standards, engage students in ongoing classroom and learning discussions and activities, and will give students early, frequent, meaningful, and clear feedback.

In addition, students who know that they *can* improve their performance do better than students who think they cannot. Students who know that intelligence is not fixed perform better academically. It is important to emphasize to students that every student can learn, and that you are there to help them in that process. Faculty who display a growth mindset prepare students for success in the course, starting day one. Time should be spent establishing a climate of inclusion as well as giving students necessary information about the course.

Some basic information about the class should be discussed the first day, and a course outline should be handed out to each student. Remind students to keep the course outline, as it is an aspirational contract of what students and faculty will accomplish together during the semester. It also contains important contact information and policy information that they may need later. Some of the specific information faculty can review with students on the first day includes information concerning course learning objectives, methods of evaluation, grading policy, plagiarism policy, veteran and disability services, and attendance requirements. Course outlines can be posted in Blackboard.

Opening Class Sessions - The following are suggestions:

1. Be in the room early to welcome students as they arrive. Be sure to smile. Students can quickly discern faculty member attitudes about their work and their students, which can positively or negatively impact their academic progress. Begin to learn their names and call them by name.
2. Announce the section and course title and put this on the board so that they are reassured that they are in the right room. If someone is in the wrong room, be kind and friendly and help them get to the correct room. Students are watching how you treat other students.
3. Distribute or refer students to the course syllabus.
4. Introduce yourself and your professional background, showing your enthusiasm for the subject.
5. Tell the student how they may contact you outside of class, i.e. email and/or telephone number.
6. Review the course learning objectives and your expectations for students' learning. If you read these to your students, they will likely not understand the objectives. One lesson for the first day could be to have the students get into small groups and break the objectives down into understandable, human language. Have them rewrite the objectives and make sense of them.
7. Ask each student to introduce him/herself. You can use icebreaker activities such as having students introduce each other. Establishing a positive learning community from the beginning is imperative for academic success.
8. Discuss any policies such as attendance policies and explain your expectations of them. Ask them for their expectations of you.
9. Provide information about emergency procedures.
10. Mix with students during the break and after class. Try to speak individually with each student at least for a moment.
11. Preview the next class session.
12. If you have a pattern that you would like to establish with them, try to do it from the very first day and be consistent.

Good luck and happy teaching!