# Learning Community

Learning communities in the academic world are groups of students who have common academic goals and/or career aspirations. These groups can meet face to face or virtually and share past experiences, both positive and negative, to expand the knowledge of all members. They allow the desired goal of the group to be achieved more efficiently.

During this academic year, I am going to encourage my students to create a learning community with their peers to broaden their learning experience, develop stronger relationships with their classmates and increase their chances of academic success. Last year, the senior class created a group in Discord for both them and the junior class to join. I will encourage that to happen again this year.

# Peer Teaching

Peer teaching involves having students teach other based on their own experiences. This creates a collaborative learning environment, which promotes learning. Since peers are equal, students can feel more comfortable learning from a peer than from the instructor. Students doing the teaching can also gain a better understanding and knowledge retention of the topic.

In my Advanced Web Methodologies course, I am going to split the class into pairs and have each pair pick a topic, spend the term researching it, and at the end of the term, teach it back to the class. This allows the students (and the instructor☺) to gain some knowledge on 8-10 different topics that would normally not be covered in the course.

# Hands-On Learning

Hands-on learning is the process of learning by doing. Long lectures can quickly make students tune out. Hands-on learning helps keep learners engaged, especially the kinesthetic learner. In my field of computer programming, hands-on learning is necessary and it is something I incorporate in all of my classes. It is impossible to learn how to code properly by watching a power point presentation and listening to me speak in front of the class. The student has to physically write the code, and learn from mistakes. During my classes, I tend to spend 10 minutes discussing a new topic, followed up by the students following along with me as a complete an exercise. I then spend the remaining time in class having the students work on additional exercises as I go around the room providing feedback. Providing this practice time increases the student’s retention rates.

# Group Work

Group work requires students to work in teams to solve a problem or complete a project. In my Fundamentals of Web course, my goal is to break my class into groups frequently to collaborate on small in class assignments involving the topic of that day. I also plan to have them work on larger group projects throughout the term building websites using the skills they have learned in class. In software development, being able to work in groups is important since the majority of the jobs that they will get upon graduating will require them to have the skills necessary to work collaboratively with their peers. Group work can help develop interpersonal, and leadership skills valued by employers in the industry.

# Establishing Relationships

During my first year of teaching, one of the things I tried very hard to do was to maintain a positive classroom environment where students felt safe, and knew that they would respected and treated fairly. I taught Introduction to Programming to the Networking students. This group of students generally do not like programming, but they require this one programming class in order to graduate. I began each class by telling students that programming is fun, and that as long as you work hard and do all the assignments, you will all do fine. I constantly repeated this throughout the term. I believe this positive re-enforcement helped many students succeed. Students want to know that they matter, and their work and class inputs are valued. I believe that maintaining a relaxed atmosphere allows students to feel comfortable taking risks and pushing the limits of their learning.