

Faculty Discussion Group
Tuesday, September 29, 2009
12:15-1:30
LA236

Notes from the meeting are written below each agenda item in bold, italics.

Theme: Getting Them in & Moving Them Along

Lunch and introductions

- *Seventeen faculty members from across the campus attended this meeting.*
- *Susan Danielson presented the theme for the meeting: Getting Them in & Moving Them Along. Discussion after each topic is as follows:*

1) Attendance

a. In-class quizzes

Group Thoughts

- *Quiz recommendations :*
- *1) short, unannounced, and once a week.*
- *2) given at various times during the class, that is not always at the beginning or the end.*
- *3) Questions should be topical. The quizzes should test knowledge and understanding of material covered that day or during the previous class.*

b. Quiz questions given in class with the answer sheet on Bb.

Group Thoughts:

- *Take home quizzes could be given as follows: Questions only given during class and submissions made on Blackboard.*
- *Methods of taking attendance also discussed such as seating charts and sign-in sheets.*

c. Clearly defined attendance policy with grade repercussions for non-attendance

d. Clickers – website www.irespond.com

Group Thoughts:

- *Clickers could create a situation where there is immediate reinforcement and check understanding of subject matter. They also improve the methodology for engaging students during class.*

Questions:

- **What kind of funding would Clickers require? Check Pricing**
- **Do the students buy them? Check Pricing; According to professors familiar with them, each clicker is not very expensive—around \$20.**
- **Can you have a Clicker program tailor-made for your needs? Yes.**
- **Can you make clickers anonymous? Yes. And this might increase class involvement and feedback for sensitive topics.**

e. General Discussion of Attendance

- *Can we remove them from the class roll? Discussion of pros and cons followed.*
- *Individual attendance policies were discussed as well as forgiveness policies. There was an overall feeling that there must be a directive toward a strict policy limiting excuses.*
- *One Professor's Policy on Excuses:*
- *Only valid excuses are:*
- ***1)Hospitalization***
- ***2)Death of family member(substantiation needed, not obituary)***
- ***3)Arrest(arrest record and/or court date)***
- *Digital Photography attendance was also discussed.*
- *It's important to alert students who are not attending class via e-mail or some other means and try to get them back on track. Keeping track of attendance and following up is a way of supporting students and helping them to be successful so that they will move along to the next semester.*
- *General Feeling as to Absences:*
"Generation Y doesn't mind what, they mind when."
Translation: They do not mind learning the material, but they want it on their time schedule.

2) Early Alert

a. Quizzes /Homework grades

- ***Grades early in the semester are diagnostic and give students time to get help and correct their performance.***

b. Course contracts and information sheets (example from Math 1115 Internet class)

- ***Contract-Have the students sign a contract at the onset of the semester that makes it clear what is expected so that they cannot say that they were unaware of teacher policies at a later date.***

- **Get contact information at the onset of the semester. Make it mandatory in order to be able to contact them later on.**
- **No grades unless you turn in contact information and sign contract.*****

c. Mid-semester (or earlier) student assessments (example from Math 1115 Internet class)

3) Helping them along

a. Office Hours

i. "Group" office hours – Math Department program – Tumulesh Solanky

- **Survey students to find potential improvements**
- **Twice weekly tutor center sessions from the basic classes to the advanced level**
- **Pooling Office Hours with peers in your department. The expansion of hours allows students more flexibility for asking for help. If their particular instructor is not available, other instructors are.**

Comment: Community College transfers: There have been problems due to the lack of equivalency to UNO standards in pre-requisite coursework. The failure rate is higher since the policy regarding transferring of coursework has changed.

ii. Students in groups for office Hours – Connie Atkinson

In large classes where it is impossible to meet individually with each and every student, students are required to meet in small groups with the professor. Professor gets to know students better and they are no longer anonymous faces. An added benefit is that the cohorts that meet together with the professor, may bond for the semester, engage more fully in the course, and help each other out.

b. Course Support

- i. Homework Help/Tutoring: Learning Resource Center, Writing Center, Math Tutor Center
Departmental Centers: Chemistry, Accounting, CSCI
- ii. Media Instruction on the UNO Media server. (<http://media.uno.edu>)
- iii. Sharing resources for courses with multiple sections

4) General Notes

UNIV needs expansion to increase community feeling in beginning students on UNO campus. Students do not know each other and do not form attachment to the school due to never having been assimilated into UNO culture.

The Graduate Assistant Response: From a Student Perspective – Kelly Ragland

- 1) Having students introduce themselves on the first day is more important than you think. Unless a student proactively goes to their professor's office, they are barely more than an anonymous face in the crowd. It makes students feel like the professor cares who they are and also lets the others students know a little about them. Something as simple as: Your Name, Where you are from, and intended Major is all it takes. This recognition of each individual sets the tone for participation in future class discussions.
- 2) Clickers seem like an excellent option to me and should be explored further. I would like to contact the company to see if they would be willing to do a demonstration here at the school.
- 3) The Faculty Discussion Group should address in-class cell phone use at a future meeting. Most professors have a cell-phone policy explained on their syllabus. However, it is not consistently enforced. Cell phone usage is even more of a problem than professors are aware of. As a student, I can see that more than a third of each undergraduate business class I take is covertly using their phones during class. It is not only hurting the students using them, but making it harder for other students to focus.
- 4) Pooling study hours is a great idea and can be expanded to many disciplines.
- 5) Students at this university do not have a problem figuring out **WHAT** to study. My professors have spelled out in detail what is going to be on the tests. They could not be clearer unless they gave us the test itself. My theory is that students have a problem knowing **HOW** to study. Some students just never developed proper study skills. If the first test grades are generally not good, break the class into groups and have them share their study tips. Or ask the students who performed well on the first test to make suggestions outside of class to avoid the "not wanting to be a nerd" issue. Then share these with the class anonymously.