

Summary: May 18, 2004 LTC Student Panel

Ten Ways to Turn Your Class into Community without Losing Time or Content: Student perspectives on building community

Suggestions given by the students:

Use of Names

- *Learn students names and address them by name in class
 - shows students you know them as individual
 - makes it easier for student to approach you
 - helps students learn each other's names
- *Be clear on how you want to be addressed (Prof. X, first name, etc.)
 - removes any hesitation on students' part about not wanting to call you the wrong thing.
- *Encourage students to meet each other
 - introductions toward beginning of class
 - use names whenever possible

Individual Student-Professor Interactions

- *Having a mandatory office hour can help encourage future office hour visits
 - makes it clear to students you have time/interest in listening to them
 - shows students where office is, that its not impossibly intimidating
 - gives student concrete reason to go into office
- *Show interest in student's background, progress, out of class interests
 - perhaps incorporate into initial mandatory office hour
 - shows that you are interested in them as an individual, fosters communication
 - allows you to bring beneficial individual interests/differences into classroom
 - helps you know where class is as far as background in subject
 - helps identify students who may be struggling earlier in term

Classroom Space

- *Helps to be able to see everyone in class – particularly in discussion classes
 - chairs in a circle or similar configuration
- *Where professor stands in relation to class can affect student response
 - if behind a lectern or other physical barrier, creates sense of distance
 - want to promote interaction – be part of the class
- *Structural barriers (e.g. pole) in classrooms can be serious hindranec

Projects/Activities

- *Field trips, movie showings and other out-of-class activities
 - help promote camaraderie among students
 - fosters “we're in this together” atmosphere
- *Group projects can be really helpful for building community
 - only works when well done
 - often helpful if individual and group components to project

- *Students will put more effort into projects when they seem “real”
 - similar to what more advanced people in field would do
 - perhaps relating (or contributing) to professor’s research
- *Individual projects can foster community as well
 - encourage peer reviewing and other interaction between students
 - foster the exchange of ideas, research, sources relevant to class
- *Discussion can be really great, but when its not:
 - try to keep it student-centered – keeps students more involved
- *Shared resources helps foster collaboration between students
 - needing to share lab, art equipment or books forces students to communicate
 - promotes “we’re all in this together” feeling
- *Prof-formed study groups with a mix of abilities and background in subject
 - great idea in principle, need to foster group work beyond simple formation

General Comments

- *“We’re all in this together” feeling seemed very fundamental to fostering community
- *Be sure not to discourage 1:1 tutoring
 - communication between departments and academic assistance important
 - perhaps invite tutors to introduce selves early
- *Prof.s should attend student events
 - always welcome, they are a part of students’ community
- *Social cliques can affect group work – need to work to break down/reach out
 - may be particularly true for minority students