Successful Strategies for Student Engagement & Deep Learning

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### Percentage of Employers who want Colleges to “place more emphasis” on essential learning outcomes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Written and Oral Communication:</td>
<td>89%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking and Analytical Reasoning:</td>
<td>81%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Complex Problem Solving:</td>
<td>75%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apply Knowledge in Real-World Settings:</td>
<td>79%</td>
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<td>Role of the U.S. in the World:</td>
<td>57%</td>
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*Data from “Raising the Bar: Employers’ Views on College Learning in the Wake of the Economic Downturn,” AAC&U, 2010.*
Reasons to Attend College*
(GVSU vs. Nat’l Average)

- Train for a specific career
- Get a better job
- Make more money
- Prepare for grad school
- Learn more about topics of interest
- Gain a general education / appreciation of ideas
- Become more cultured

*Data and graph courtesy of Philip Batty & Institutional Analysis
LIBERAL STUDIES 100

First Day of Class

Frame the Course for the Student
  Why are you taking this course?
  What do you expect out of it?
  Why do you think the University requires you to take this course?

Make the Case for the Course
  Why are YOU teaching it?
  Why do YOU think it is important?
  Show them your motivation, interests, background–a personal connection is highly valued by today’s students.*
  Why is the course relevant to their careers even though it seemingly has “nothing to do” with their majors?

*From focus group study for the article “What Students Say about Liberal Education at GVSU,” AACU Liberal Education Journal, Fall 2010
Course Design

Foundational Readings (included in course reader used by all sections) include works by Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates, which elicit predictable student comments:

“The readings were dry but they come along with a course like this.”

“The course could include more modern material to help us college students relate more”

“Some of the readings were difficult to understand.”

“There could be more interesting readings.”

“Perhaps include more relevant/contemporary readings.”
New readings chosen to counter claims of “irrelevancy”

   by Jan Hendryk

2. *Alternative Music: Alternative to what?*  
   by Jan Hendryk

3. *Battlefield Conversion* by Michael Lynch  
   (Interview with three veterans of the *War on Drugs*)

4. *Down with Facebook! What nobody bothers to mention about the social-networking site is that it's really dull--mind-numbingly dull* by Matt Labash

5. *Our Cell Phones, Ourselves* by Christine Rosen

6. *The World’s a Cell Phone Stage: The device is upending social rules and creating a new culture* by Ryan Kim
Assignments designed to counter claims of “irrelevancy”

1. Alciato’s Emblems
Group Project studying the wood cut emblems of Andrea Alciato (1492-1550)

~A fox entered a theatre director's store-room, and found a human head skillfully finished, so elegantly made that the only thing wanting was breathing; in other ways it was like a living creature. Taking it up in her paws, she said: "Oh, what a head is this! - But it has no brain!"

2. Interview Project
Interview the person with the job you want to have, and interview a person doing a job you would never consider.
“Learned a lot and discovered a new way of thinking”

“I was originally hesitant about taking the course, but was pleasantly surprised at the wide area of topics I learned in the class.”

“I loved this course so much! I got to share my opinion and hear other opinions and ideas. I was able to practice speaking skills and make healthy relationships with classmates. I will miss this class.”

“It made the point of a liberal education really clear.”

“It gave me a more open view on everything.”

*Significant decrease in comments on “relevancy”*
The Instructor gave projects, tests or assignments that required original or creative thinking
100% of respondents “strongly agree or agree”

The Instructor displayed a personal interest in the students and their learning
100% of respondents “strongly agree or agree”

This course has increased my knowledge in the areas covered
Ratings improved from 92% to 96% of respondents stating “strongly agree or agree”

I am satisfied with the overall quality of the course
Ratings improved from 86% to 94% of respondents stating “strongly agree or agree”
References


