



“Teaching Tips: For Faculty by Faculty”

Often instructors are surprised at the comments in the end-of-term student assessments. Daily and/or weekly assessments of the class by the students might help the instructor be in touch with the concerns of the students allowing modification of techniques and additional guidance prior to the end of the term.

Other tips have addressed having students write daily reflections at the end of the class so that the instructor can see how the students processed the material. This allows the instructor to address the areas needing attention at the beginning of the next class prior to moving to the next block of information. This also allows the instructor to see which students need extra assistance in understanding the material and to handle the situation effectively to minimize frustrations. Another tip was to have a box in the back of the room in which students may anonymously drop their concerns and/or positive reflections on the class.

Another reflective technique is the following:

At the beginning of the term, instructors could distribute index cards to the students. A “recipe” box with alphabetical dividers could be kept in the classroom. Upon entering the class, each student would pick up his/her index card. Students could keep a reflective journal on the cards throughout the term. Students could be given five minutes at the end of the session to reflect upon the class, to write a positive comment, and to acknowledge an area needing improvement. These cards could be returned to the appropriate place in the recipe box at the end of each class. The instructor should read the comments; if a student lists a concern, the instructor is aware of the situation and can take the opportunity to handle the matter efficiently prior to end-of-term assessments.

In order to use this technique effectively, trust must exist between the instructor and the student. Otherwise, students will not be comfortable writing areas needing attention. They might feel that retribution could occur. Besides for personalized communication to build this trust, the instructor may also give credit to the students for posting these reflections. The instructor could thank the students for their honesty. Also, the students should be informed that their comments help them as well as others. Usually, if one person has a concern or question, others have the same concern or question.

Finally, for this technique to work, instructors will need to “check their egos at the door.” They should not view the comments as personal attacks. The reflections should be used as motivators to modify techniques which will help guide the students to realizing their dreams.