

New Faculty Orientation - "Launching a Successful Semester"

August 12th, 2009

Informal Session Summary

1. What do you do on the first day or during the first sessions that has/have been successful?

- a. Set expectations (yours and theirs)
- b. Assuage fears/demonstrate that you care about the students
- c. Use introductions/icebreakers/games (e.g., bingo)
- d. Have students fill out information cards/sheets
- e. Have students provide photos to help in learning their names
- f. Immediate Immersion/Get them familiar with, and excited about, the material
- g. Introduce the "language of the course" (i.e., key terms and acronyms)
- h. Ask the question, "Why are you taking this class?"
- i. Humanize yourself/Tell about yourself/be a person
- j. Show your own excitement about the material
- k. Give basic study tips that will lead to success in the class
- l. Learn student names ASAP
- m. Balance rigor in order to avoid overwhelming students
- n. Review the syllabus in an interesting manner
- o. Ask, "Who wants to make a million dollars?" Then show the statistics of what an individual with a bachelor's degree will make versus an individual without a degree.
- p. Ask the students about their best and worst experiences with the subject matter
- q. As an instructor, learn to slow down – success is about establishing rapport and relationships. You will get the important material covered, but cramming it in just to get it covered does not lead to knowledge and success for the students.
- r. Tell real-world stories related to the material
- s. Give funny/small "prizes" or treats
- t. Incorporate applications along with theory

2. What other techniques have you heard or read about that could be considered useful – Is there anything you've always wanted to do on a first day but never done? What has kept you from doing it?

- a. Taking pictures of students with student permission or have them send them electronically (previous school did not allow)
- b. Use of Blackboard (previous school did not provide training)
- c. Provide pre-course questions
- d. Provide evaluations on an ongoing basis
- e. Provide syllabi, but wait to thoroughly cover it until the end of the drop/add period
- f. Utilizing face book as a learning/teaching/interactive tool (never thought of it before)

3. What is your definition of a successful first day, week and month?/Given your answer to c above, what are your goals for the first day, week, and month?

- a. Students return/no drops
- b. Students become engaged, and enjoy the class

- c. Good participation/ you've succeeded in getting students to talk
- d. Students know the syllabi inside and out and understand the course requirements
- e. During the first month of the semester, students meet ¼ of course objectives
- f. See expectation in the students' eyes
- g. Established rapport with students
- h. Stay reasonably on schedule
- i. You have succeeded in having a few of those really great classes where everything is "right on!"

4. "First Day Horror Stories" - What are some negative first day experiences you remember from when you were in college? How do you prevent the same experience?

- a. Fear of the instructor/Impersonal instructor – (e.g., Instructor announces he/she is the 800 lb. gorilla in the room, and tells students to deal with it)
- b. Going to fare with professional research detailed discussion (especially with lower level courses)
- c. The instructor being unprepared/incompetent
- d. Instructors that lock the door after the first two minutes of class.
- e. Instructors that hand out the syllabi, then leave the classroom.
- f. Information overload
- g. Preset expectations that indicate likely failure in the class
- h. Go late with the lecture

5. What question/questions do you have as you begin your teaching career at Arkansas Tech?

- a. How can big classes be handled effectively?
 - i. *Suggestions:*
 - 1. *Use of the "clicker" system*
 - 2. *Students sign roll, but if signatures do not match head count, everyone receives an "absence" for that day*
 - 3. *Team-based learning: <http://faculty.ucmo.edu/teambasedlearning/>*
- b. How well do junior and senior students in a discipline accept new faculty?
 - i. *As a general rule, Tech students are receptive to faculty based on factors such as how the instructor handles the class, shows respect to the students, and presents the material, rather than on whether the instructor is new.*
- c. How far will students try to push new instructors?
 - i. *(see answer to b above)*
- d. What are the expectations of the department?
 - i. *Each new instructor will need to ask this question of his/her department head and seek out other instructors in the department who will share tips and information (see packet handout, "New Survival Guide.")*
- e. How much control do I have over my course design?
 - i. *Seek guidance from the Department Head*
 - ii. *Typically lower level courses are more similarly structured for consistency while upper level courses are designed solely by the instructor.*
- f. How much should I pay for a babysitter in town?
 - i. *To be followed up on regarding churches with baby-sitting services and how to find student babysitters.*
- g. How do I download the class list off of OneTech?
 - i. *To be followed up on by Registrar.*
- h. What opportunities are there for playing soccer?
 - i. *To be followed up on by getting information from Shellie Hanna, TechFit Dir.*