



Things I Will and Won't Miss

I am just about to retire from Penn State and leave my faculty position teaching undergraduates. I'll still be working; there's this newsletter to edit and a world of faculty who still need advice, ideas, and encouragement to do their very best in the classroom. But you don't end 33 years of college teaching without thinking about those things that will and won't be missed on campus. Here's my list.

Things I'll miss

- The nervous anticipation of going to class, rehearsing my lines as I drive to campus, thinking about all that's possible, believing that I just might be able to make some of it happen.
- Those days in class when students get it. Sometimes that new understanding shines from their faces, sometimes they make a comment that attests to how well they've got it, and sometimes they report the details in a paper. Sometimes they give you credit. Even if they don't, it's still an event worthy of witness.
- Those days in class when I get it. When I see how to connect content to students; efforts to learn to appropriate processes; and students to the insights, ideas, and motivation of other students.
- Seeing seniors at graduation and remembering how they looked that first day of their first semester in college.
- Watching students who started out failing or doing poorly learning to succeed.

- Colleagues whose passion for teaching spreads enough hot coals to light new fires and rekindle others when their embers burn low or die out.
- Colleagues who use their fine minds, keen intellects, and inquisitive sensibilities to tackle teaching and learning with intellectual robustness.

Things I won't miss

- Those bright, capable students who don't care and won't make an effort. Those students full of potential who happily do work just barely above the line that marks acceptable.
- Colleagues who have given up on teaching and are doing time in the classroom—the ones who've locked themselves out of meaningful, trusting relationships by using policies and practices that render all encounters with students adversarial.
- Colleagues who blame students for what they aren't accomplishing as teachers.
- End-of-course ratings that ask irrelevant questions and give administrators data from which to draw dubious conclusions.
- Peer reviews where the Lake Wobegon effect devalues any teaching that is truly above average.
- Grading papers so full of grammatical errors that it's difficult to see beyond them to the ideas behind them.

- Students so full of excuses there's no room left for learning.
- Students with whom conversations never get past the points—those taken off, missed, totaled, awarded for extra credit, given, earned, offered as bonus, secured surreptitiously, or bought on the black market.
- Those days in class when I can't make it happen, when my best efforts don't make a difference. Those days when passivity, like fog, settles over the classroom, when students yawn and nod off and no amount of enthusiasm cuts through the chill of complacency—those days when only the cold signifies that this place isn't teaching hell. ♥

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**Editor**

Maryellen Weimer, Ph.D.

Penn State Berks Campus
P.O. Box 7009, Reading, PA 19610-7009

Phone: 610-396-6170

E-mail: grg@psu.edu

Magna Editor

Rob Kelly

robkelly@magnapubs.com

President

William Haight

whaight@magnapubs.com

Publisher

David Burns

dburns@magnapubs.com

Creative Services Manager

Mark Manghera

Customer Service Manager

Mark Beyer

For subscription information, contact:

Customer Service: 800-433-0499

E-mail: custserv@magnapubs.com

Website: www.magnapubs.com

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- Write with the understanding that your audience includes faculty in a wide variety of disciplines and in a number of different institutional settings; i.e., what you describe must be relevant to a significant proportion of our audience.
- Write directly to the audience, remembering that this is a newsLETTER.
- Keep the article short; generally between 2 and 3 double-spaced pages.
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Three-Option Feedback: A Strategy for Improving Course Evaluations

By Robert T. Brill, *Moravian College, Pennsylvania*
brillr@moravian.edu

The major benefit any conscientious professor seeks in course evaluations is useful feedback. Yet most rating instruments generate vague, unjustified student comments. Quantitative scales provide ambiguous statistics for such generic instructional areas as preparation, fairness in grading, etc., but they don't include any formative commentary. Open-ended questions ask students what things the instructor should continue to include in or eliminate from the course, and students list items but often without any kind of rationale.

I try to add value to the feedback collected for administrative purposes with a course evaluation form tailored to the particular course. I use the same format in all my courses, and I think this approach contains some good, practical ideas that might benefit faculty, even those who already use other assessment methods to obtain student feedback.

The three-option feedback system I've developed is user friendly, requests connections to targeted student learning outcomes, prompts students to reflect on specific components of the course (e.g., the books used, assignments completed, etc.), and requires students to justify their evaluative decisions about those components. The form starts with basic instructions that direct students to answer candidly, anonymously, and with as much detail as possible. The students are instructed to respond to each designated course component with one of three options: KEEP AS IS, KEEP BUT MODIFY, or REMOVE FROM THE COURSE. Each option is accompanied by an additional request—"Justify why it should stay, be changed, or be removed." The final instruction asks respondents to keep in mind the targeted student learning outcomes of the course that are provided for them directly on the form, cut and pasted from the actual syl-

labus. Then I list the course components about which I'm requesting feedback, leaving plenty of space between them for student responses. Typically I list such course components as each text, each substantive assignment or classifications of assignments (e.g., journal, reaction papers to books, presentations, etc.), general lecture format, discussion opportunities, course policies, and exam formats.

These feedback forms could be completed in class, but I distribute them during one class and request that they be thoroughly completed for the next class. For those students who may prefer to type their responses, I provide a Blackboard electronic form.

Students return with this supplementary feedback form completed the day they do the more general course evaluation required by the institution. I believe having already reflected on the important components of the course prepares students to complete the in-class evaluation. The supplementary form and the general course evaluation forms are collected in separate envelopes.

I have benefited from feedback that students have provided on the supplementary take-home course assessment. In 15 course sections (seven different course titles) across six semesters, I have always had at least two suggestions that led to course improvement changes. Over half of those changes were based upon sound justifications related to the student learning outcomes stated for the course.

Let me offer an example that illustrates. In a course where students did frequent self-assessments in response to questions in the text, the vast majority of students recommended that I remove or modify this assignment. Their justification involved a perception that this was busy-work and that the prompts were often too personal and did not promote the kind of critical thinking called for in course outcomes. Based on this feedback, I decided

The End of the Course: Another Perspective

By Joan L. Atlas, Bentley College,
Massachusetts
jatlas@bentley.edu

I read with interest the article titled “The Last Class: A Critical Course Component,” by Vianne Timmons and Brian D. Wagner, in the January 2007 issue. That article stresses the importance of wrapping up the course in the final class with exercises and/or discussion that causes the students to reflect on what they have learned. I agree with the authors’ basic premise, but the reality of my teaching situation seems to preclude use of the last class for their suggested exercises.

I teach an expository writing course that includes an extensive research project and requires a final presentation by each student as well. The last five classes of the semester are reserved for the presentations, and even then we often find it difficult to fit them all in. I am sure that my situation is not unique, so the question is, how can a teacher meaningfully wrap up the course when every minute of the last class is devoted to final presentations or some

other content-related activity?

Even if the class as a whole cannot collectively reflect on what has been learned, this can still be accomplished on an individual basis. In my writing class, every semester concludes with a final essay or journal entry where students put the lessons from the course together in their own way and reflect on what they have derived from the class. They review the material covered in the course and draw individual conclusions about it and their learning. I look forward to reading these reflections, and every semester I keep copies of many outstanding ones. Of course, a writing assignment may not work for many types of classes—but instructors could still include a question on the final exam that asks students to reflect on what they learned and its value to them. (It would be important for the students to be given this question before the exam.) Even a short paragraph could go a long way toward accomplishing the goals mentioned by Timmons and Wagner of “bring[ing] closure to the course in a way students will remember” and furnishing

professors with the “opportunity to gauge the success of the course.”

I use another technique to wrap up the course—I write the class a letter that I hand out at the end of the last class. This is a great opportunity for me to convey any final thoughts that I did not have time to express as the semester came to an end, and putting them in writing seems especially effective. In my letter I comment on such things as the ways in which the class participated, worked together, threw themselves into the task of learning to improve their writing, learned to think critically, and challenged me. I always tell the students that I enjoyed getting to know them and that I hope they will stop to speak to me when they see me around campus in the future. I have received many positive comments from students about my “farewell letter.” I believe that it causes students to reflect further on what they accomplished and learned. And lest we forget, the end of each semester is also significant to the instructor. A letter allows me to say goodbye to my students and wish them well. ♥

Use ‘Stuff Happens’ Cards to Handle Student Excuses

Students and excuses seem to go hand in hand. Sometimes the excuses result from real events and personal problems that legitimately prevent a student from being in class, completing an assignment on time, or doing what some other policy or procedure may stipulate. Not having the wisdom of Solomon, most faculty struggle to fairly adjudicate between the real and unreal reasons offered for noncompliance.

Professor Daniela A. Feenstra, who teaches a variety of business classes at Central Pennsylvania College, has developed an interesting way through this dilemma. On the first day of class she gives each student a “Stuff Happens” card. It’s about the size of a business card and also includes the semester date and a place

for the student’s name. In the syllabus (and in class) she explains that this is a student’s “one time only” forgiveness card. If a student is late for class or might need a one-day extension on a paper, the student may trade the “Stuff Happens” card for this exception. Students don’t have to get her approval or permission to use the card. Use of it is entirely at their discretion. However, each student gets only one card, which is not transferable and won’t be replaced if lost.

If no “stuff happens” during a given semester and a student follows all classroom policies and procedures, the “Stuff Happens” card may be traded in the last week of class for 20 bonus points.

Sometimes more than one “stuff hap-

pens” event may occur during the semester. When it does and the student presents the excuse or excuses, the teacher once again faces the problems described at the beginning of the article. However, Professor Feenstra notes that the “Stuff Happens” card takes care of most emergency situations. It covers the conscientious student who may occasionally have a problem. Other students are probably going to need more instructor feedback anyway. ♥

Frequent Exams: Better Results for Students

It's not a new finding: in general, more exams means better scores for students. But it's nice to keep having the finding confirmed and to have yet another specific example of those better results.

In the study referenced below, the students were enrolled in two sections of an introductory statistics course for sociology majors. Both sections had the same instructor, same text, and same material presented in class. Students enrolled in each were similar in terms of gender and year in school. In the control section, students took two midterm exams (one at the end of the sixth week, the other at the end of the 12th week) and a two-hour cumulative final. In the experimental section students took an exam every other week starting at the end of the second week, for a total of six exams, plus the same cumulative final. Students were given one-third the amount of time for each of the biweekly exams.

As for the better results, students given the biweekly exams scored, on average,

about 10 percentage points, or one letter grade, higher on the exams taken during the semester. They scored about 15 percentage points higher on the final than those students who only took the two midterm exams.

There were some other persuasive results. More than 11 percent of the students in the control section withdrew from the course. Not one student in the experimental section did. Moreover, students in the experimental section evaluated both the course and the instructor more highly. Seventy-one percent rated the instructor as "one of the best" compared with instructors of other courses they had taken. In the control section only 36 percent gave that rating to the instructor. In this case the same instructor taught both sections. Forty-nine percent in the section with the biweekly exam said that they would definitely recommend the course to friends, compared with 14 percent in the section with midterm exams.

The faculty researchers who completed

this analysis suggest several reasons for these dramatic results. First, students had less material to learn for the biweekly exam, which made them less likely to cram for the exams. Second, they got feedback earlier and more often, which helped them adjust their study behaviors. Third, repeated experience taking the exams increased their feelings of competence and confidence, and that in turn increased their motivation to study and do well. The results could be explained by any one of these reasons, or these explanations may well have had a cumulative effect. Whatever the cause, the fact that students do better when they are tested more often has been confirmed yet again.

Reference: Myers, C.B., and Myers, S.M. (2007). Assessing assessments: The effects of two exam formats on course achievement and evaluation. *Innovative Higher Education*, 31, 227–236. ♥

Where Students Sit: A Rejoinder

Back in the March 2005 issue of this newsletter, we reported results analyzing the effects of assigned seating in a large physics course. The results were of special note because even though the students were randomly assigned seats, where they sat was still strongly correlated with their grades. Students in the back not only got lower grades, they had poorer attendance and less positive attitudes about physics.

Steven Kalinowski and Mark Taper (reference below) were troubled by those results. They decided to see if the results held true for a 200-level biology course for majors. Their course enrolled 45 students whom they randomly assigned to seats in their long, narrow, and gently sloping lecture hall. Their students took four exams and a final.

In this biology course, seat location had

no effect on exam scores. Kalinowski and Taper offer four possible explanations for these different results. First, the physics lecture hall was larger; that course enrolled four times as many students as were in the biology course. Second, the physics course enrolled nonmajors and the biology course was a majors course. Third, the physics class met only twice a week; the biology course convened three times a week. Finally, physics content differs significantly from biology content. To learn physics, students must master the concepts. In biology, it is easier to get away with memorizing the facts.

Obviously, more research is needed to establish whether or not where students sit in classroom affects how they perform. What more research is likely to uncover is that seat location, like most other teaching and learning variables, depends on a host

of complicated, interconnected variables. Easy, obvious answers are few and far between when it comes to understanding how teaching and learning interact in the dynamic milieu of the classroom.

Reference: Kalinowski, S. and Taper, M.L. (2007). The effects of seat location on exam grades and student perceptions in an introductory biology class. *Journal of College Science Teaching*, 36 (4), 54–57.

If you're interested in taking a look at the research done in the physics class, here's that reference: Perkins, K.K. and Wieman, C. (2005). The surprising impact of seat location on student performance. *The Physics Teacher*, 43 (1), 30–33. ♥

The Benefits of Music and Stretching in Maintaining Student Attention

By Christopher H. Kodani and Michael Wood, Clayton State University, Georgia
ChristopherKodani@mail.clayton.edu

Given how students fidget during lectures and the popularity of personal music devices, it sometimes seems that students would much rather hear music and move around than listen to a professor. Our solution is simple and direct—we encourage them to do both!

To help students fight off lecture fatigue in the science classes that Christopher teaches, we have implemented a “seventh inning stretch” during which students get up out of their seats and perform some basic stretches while music is playing. In fact, the idea is not so crazy, as the importance of a break during lectures has been noted by other college professors in various pedagogical publications, including this newsletter. Both we and these colleagues have found that giving students a break from taking notes increases the chances that students will stay mentally productive throughout the class.

Some faculty who give students breaks use this time to show videos or engage students in discussions or other content-related activities. Our approach is a bit different. We believe that there may be benefits to having a break that is simply that—a break from the material, a break from lecture, a break from sitting. Here’s how the seventh inning stretch works in

Christopher’s biology course. Halfway through every lecture, students get the chance to stand up and do a series of easy, yoga-style stretches while popular music plays over the classroom’s audio system. Stretch breaks typically last two to three minutes. All the music is chosen by the professor and is popular music, most of it relatively current, the 1970s to the 2000s, and includes a wide variety of artists and formats, so as to appeal to our diverse student body.

Near the end of the semester, we administered a survey through WebCT Vista, a Web-based teaching platform, that allowed us to easily record and tabulate student responses. Most of the students responded favorably to the seventh inning stretch. The majority agreed or strongly agreed that it enhanced their learning. Furthermore, 38 out of the 49 stated that they would like other instructors to adopt the seventh inning stretch, and none strongly agreed with discontinuing breaks altogether. The class was almost evenly divided upon whether or not stretch breaks affected student retention within the class. Most did not want to do other activities during the break and recommended that its format not be changed.

We also invited students to provide written feedback describing how they felt about the stretch. Their answers helped to explain responses on the survey. One student wrote, “I really enjoyed the seventh

inning stretch. I feel that it breaks up the class a little. By breaking up the class you can clear your head for just a second. By being able to clear your head you can make more room for more information.” Similarly, a classmate wrote “The stretch helps you refocus and continue to learn for the entire class.”

A few students did want the break activity to be content focused. One wrote, “I enjoyed the stretch, but I believe it would be more beneficial if it was mixed up by having a discussion, a short video, a demonstration, or a little review of what was just taught.” Taken in the context of the overwhelming popularity of the stretch, this student’s comment and these data tell us that although a break is necessary for most students, it cannot take the place of good teaching methods, active learning, and variety. We are not arguing against the use of multiple teaching strategies—in fact, a change in teaching technique during lecture is universally accepted as important for maintaining student attention as well as for addressing all students’ learning styles. Even when a variety of active learning strategies is used, we believe there is still a need to take a short rest from learning. The seventh inning stretch is a unique, quick, and fun way to increase student attention during the second half of class. 🍀

Conditions Associated with Classroom Conflict

Students can and do regularly disrupt the classroom. Sometimes they are openly hostile, challenging the teacher’s authority and objecting to course requirements and classroom policies. More often, the conflict grows out of their inattentiveness and passivity. They arrive late, leave early, talk during class, and don’t even bother to hide their boredom.

Faculty researchers (reference below) wondered whether characteristics of

courses and instructors might be associated with conflict. They also wondered whether instructors’ preparation and caring attitude toward students related to the presence or absence of students’ disruptive behaviors. And they were curious as to how instructors went about resolving conflict and whether they perceived the techniques they used as being successful.

To find answers to these questions and to document whether the differences

between hostile and inattentive conflict were real, they surveyed a national sample of psychology professors. Faculty who completed a 71-item questionnaire were asked to answer while thinking about a single course they had taught recently in which they experienced a high level of student conflict.

Analysis of the survey results docu-

Are You as Good a Teacher as You Think?

Now's there's an article title that gets your attention...at least it got mine. The article that follows this title (reference below) is a bit depressing, but the points it makes do constitute worthwhile reminders. The author offers three reasons why teachers might not be as good as they think.

First, the author notes, "there is a great deal of evidence from social-cognitive psychology that pretty much anyone who isn't clinically depressed systematically overestimates his or her traits and abilities in a wide variety of domains." (p. 8; and yes, the author does cite evidence supporting this claim) And college teachers may be especially likely to make such overestimations. Despite being surrounded by colleagues, teaching is still a solitary endeavor. Without consultation, faculty decide how to organize courses, what materials to include, and what assignments and exams to give. What happens in classrooms is observed by students but not regularly by anyone else. Meetings with students occur

in the privacy of faculty offices. Faculty work on course preparation and grading tasks alone. "When we think about how good we are, we tend to focus almost exclusively on our own efforts. The fact that many of our colleagues, perhaps most, are working just as hard escapes our notice." (p. 8)

Second, teaching effectiveness may be overestimated because people have a tendency to define goodness in some pretty self-serving ways. So if you give entertaining lectures, then entertaining lectures becomes a component included in your definition of good teaching. Likewise, if you are able to establish rapport with students, then establishing rapport becomes a key element in your definition of teaching excellence. The point is, we define good teachers in terms of what we do well. We may perform some teaching functions poorly but never address them because as far as we're concerned they aren't ingredients of effective instruction. Definitions so derived are eclectic and idiosyncratic. This

means someone who lectures well can still think he or she is a good teacher, despite accumulating evidence that other methods better achieve most learning outcomes.

Finally, the very feedback that should be creating accurate and balanced portraits of teachers fails to do so. To support this claim, the author cites evidence documenting how often the midpoint on evaluation rating scales is not the average score. On a nine-point scale, for example, 7.22 may be the actual average. At most places where colleagues observe and rate other colleagues, "average" scores are even higher. "These kinds of student and peer evaluations tend to confirm our inflated views of our own abilities. A better interpretation of your rating of six on a seven-point scale, then, is that you have no extremely obvious shortcomings. That's a long way from being a superstar." (p. 11)

Add to this the fact that positive feedback comes to our attention more often

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CLASSROOM CONFLICT

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mented a number of important findings. First, the hypothesis about there being two different kinds of conflict was confirmed. Second, "we found that the amount of conflict that faculty reported was actually unrelated to many characteristics of courses or instructors." (p. 183) In other words, things like the instructor's gender, race, age, years of teaching experience, full-time versus part-time status, and class size did not relate to the amount of reported conflict. These findings are at odds with some previous research that has documented that students tend to challenge the authority of female professors and faculty of color more often than they challenge white male faculty. Other research results do not find correlations between instructor characteristics and such things as student ratings of instructor effectiveness.

However, these researchers did find some interesting correlations between instructional methods and conflict. For example, "the use of lecture correlated directly with inattentive classroom conflict. On the other hand, using discussion or active learning related inversely with inattentive classroom conflict." (p. 182)

Hostile conflict—as in challenging, open resistance—was found to be related to "whether faculty expressed care toward students, communicated respect, behaved sensitively, and remained warm and engaged." (p. 184) Faculty who did not approach students in these ways reported higher levels of conflict. And these faculty behaviors were also found to be most effective at reducing conflict. The researchers describe these methods as "working alliances" and report results that suggest faculty build them when they attend "to the emotional bonds that exist in the classroom," when they promote "a

common sense of purpose when teaching," and when students are treated respectfully despite disagreements. (p. 185) Even though more than 61 percent of this sample reported that they ignored conflict and the behaviors associated with it, this strategy was related to poorer outcomes.

In sum, based on these findings, faculty are well advised, yet again, to take seriously their relationships with students. In this case it seems that an ounce of prevention may well be worth the pound of cure.

Reference: Meyers, S.A., Bender, J., Hill, E.K., and Thomas, S.Y. (2006). How do faculty experience and respond to classroom conflict? *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 18 (3), 180-187. [Note: this is an electronic journal that may be found at www.isetl.org/ijtlhel/.]

More Discussion—Less Lecture

“Although many of us would like to get beyond lecturing, we often lack concrete strategies for doing so, particularly in our larger classes.” (p. 236) David Yamane, who teaches sociology courses enrolling around 60 students, reports on a strategy he uses that has allowed him to reduce the amount of time he lectures from 80 percent to something a bit less than 30 percent. He has created and posts on the course Web page various **course preparation assignments (CAPs)**. Successful discussion in class depends on students having read and thought about course material before they arrive in class. CAPs are the vehicle Yamane uses to get students engaged with course material before class.

Here’s how CAPs work. Students read and think about a chapter or some other part of the textbook, and then they respond in writing using the same CAP format each time they prepare one of these assignments. Each CAP begins with an introductory statement, followed by an objective for the assignment, some relevant background information, and then the writing assignment that students complete. There’s a sample CAP included in an appendix at the end of the article. It’s about racial inequality. After reading and reviewing information on the CAP, students are instructed to generate five testable hypotheses that they believe might account for a specified set of income differences.

Students arrive in class with the CAP completed. Yamane might have them start the discussion in small groups where students pool and integrate their answers. Groups might then report one of their findings to the whole class. Often their analysis is superficial or flawed. Yamane then presents more explanatory material and sends students back their group to incorporate and respond to this new information. To prevent CAP discussions from becoming stale, Yamane regularly changes the routine. Some days students may role-play; other days they may debate different sides or “interrogate” each other’s proposals.

Yamane believes that the success of this strategy depends on careful construction of the CAPs. He points out that discussion often falters because students don’t see the point. That’s why objectives are an important part of the CAP itself and become an emphasis of the in-class discussion. Another key to success is the questions asked on the CAP. They need to be authentic—questions without prespecified answers and questions that allow students to offer opinions, points of view, or information. “An authentic question has an indeterminate number of ‘right’ or acceptable answers.” (p. 240)

How does Yamane “motivate” students to complete the CAPs? If they don’t attend class, they get no credit for completing a CAP. If they are in class, CAPs are graded on a credit/no credit basis. The size of the class rules out close grading. “I simply try to ensure that students have made some serious effort to complete the assignments.” (p. 241) Before starting to deduct credit, Yamane gives students a warning. In one class of 60, students completed 18 CAPs and he gave only five written warnings. The warning was enough to move the quality of students’ work up to an acceptable level in all cases.

Yamane used a variety of different assessment methods to ascertain the effectiveness of this move away from lectures to discussion. He compared the discussion course with the same course taught by him in the more traditional way. He found some intriguing differences. For example, a bit over 50 percent of the students in the lecture course thought the responsibility for class being successful on a daily basis was primarily the professor’s. In the discussion course 75 percent thought the responsibility was divided evenly between the professor and students. In the lecture course just about 53 percent strongly agreed or agreed that hearing the views of other students was an important part of the course. That percentage jumped to almost 87 in the discussion course. And 88 percent in the discussion course agreed or strongly agreed that they benefited from

hearing the views and experiences of other students in the class. About 56 percent of students in the lecture class reported the same benefit.

Of special note was the effectiveness of the CAPs in increasing the amount of study time students reported devoting to the class. In the lecture class students on average reported spending 3.8 hours studying. In the discussion class the mean was 5.3 hours. And perhaps of most concern to faculty—What kind of effect did use of the CAPs have on exam performance? The average score on the first exam was 6 percent higher in the discussion section. It was 11 percent higher on the second exam.

Yamane writes in the conclusion, “These assignments have been a great success in my courses, allowing me to foster student engagement by spending the majority of class time coordinating, facilitating, and leading discussions, rather than constantly lecturing at students.” (p. 246) He notes that he has used the strategy in undergraduate general education courses with enrollments of up to 85 students.

Reference: Yamane, D. (2006). Course preparation assignments: A strategy for creating discussion-based courses. *Teaching Sociology*, 36 (July), 236–248. ♥

THREE-OPTION FEEDBACK

FROM PAGE 2

to stop using that textbook and write my own self-reflective prompts. I opted to use fewer of them and also to more tightly align them with course content and critical thinking objectives. Student response to these changes has been positive. As this example illustrates, students can provide instructors useful feedback. The format used to solicit their input directly impacts the quality of what they provide. ♥

Students and Study Time: Not Good News

The rule of thumb, which many instructors still tell students is the norm for their classes, requires two hours (some even say three) outside of class for every hour in class. Unfortunately, this rule and reality forcefully collide. The article referenced below contains an excellent summary of various research analyses of student study time. For example in 2003, on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), only 13 percent of first-year students reported studying more than 25 hours a week for 12 credit hours. Forty-one percent reported that they spent less than 10 hours a week studying for 12 credit hours. Even for courses considered hard, such as math, in other research students reported spending something much closer to an hour than the recommended two hours.

One of the reasons students spend less time studying is that they are spending more time working. In a 2001 study, 39 percent of first-year college students reported working 16 or more hours a week. That is a 4 percent increase from 1993.

In the study referenced below, business and marketing students used a diary approach to document how they used their time during a one-week period. The sur-

vey listed 28 different activities that ranged from academic to personal. Researchers also collected demographic information and measures of motivation, academic self-efficacy, and academic stress.

These results confirmed previous research. These students reported spending on average less than one hour studying for every credit hour they took. They “spend about as much time watching TV and other forms of entertainment as they do studying. In addition, students on average spend significantly more time working than taking classes or studying.” (p. 124)

Data from this research established two distinct student profiles. The first, labeled by researchers as campus-centered students, describes traditional college students. The second profile, life-centered students, can be thought of as more modern college students who have a broad focus on life beyond the campus. They work more and spend less time on entertainment. The campus-centered cohort do study more, work less (sometimes not at all), watch more TV, and spend more time pursuing other forms of entertainment. They are also more motivated, have higher levels of academic self-efficacy, and have slightly higher GPAs. However, the two profiles could not be distinguished in

terms of academic ability, gender, race, age, or the number of credits completed.

This study looked at a number of other interesting research questions that we do not have space to report here. The researchers conclude with a section that discusses the implications of their findings. They recommend that faculty restructure courses so that assignments occur more often and in smaller chunks. The goal here is to keep students regularly and frequently engaged with course content. Even though it is not mentioned, perhaps the most important implication is an individual one: how much time do students spend studying in your course? Given what we know about average GPAs, it is pretty clear that many students are doing very well in college with much less study time than we advocate.

Reference: Nonis, S.A., Philhours, M.J., and Hudson, G.I. (2006). Where does the time go? A diary approach to business and marketing students' time use. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 28 (2), 121-134. ♥

ARE YOU AS GOOD

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than negative. Students pass out compliments; often they make just as many complaints, but not to our faces. They are too worried about their grades to tell us what they really think. When students do complain (say anonymously on rating forms), we respond by questioning how hard they worked and what they contributed to the class. A quiet student who earned a C has no right to offer critique?

Making the same point from a different perspective, the author observes that

“college students are incredibly good at seeming to have learned stuff.” (p. 12) They nod in class, don't ask questions, and cough back content verbatim on exams. He recounts how when he started incorporating some cooperative learning formats, he saw students struggling for a whole period to master content that he'd breezed through in 10 minutes of lecture and had assumed students understood clearly.

So will coming to the realization that teaching prowess may be overestimated be so depressing and demoralizing that faculty will give up on their teaching, transfer-

ring energy to research or administration? The author doesn't think so, because once faculty reach this point of weakness, there's no shortage of resources, approaches, and techniques for improving. “The difficulty is getting to this point. When we accept the proposition that we're not as good as we think, we're already considerably better than we were.” (p. 13)

Reference: Price, P.C. (2006). Are you as good a teacher as you think? *Thought and Action*, (Fall), 7-13. ♥