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MOTIVATION

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In the last issue of Teaching Matters, we focused on good beginnings, based on the adage “Well begun is half done.” A good beginning can take us halfway to our goal of a successful semester. Sometimes, though, our enthusiasm or students’ interest wanes as we work to complete that second half.

Before we consider how to motivate students, it’s important to examine our own motivation level. If it diminishes, students will perceive it, and our teaching will be less effective.

In “Teachers Get Bored, Too,” Joan Flaherty offers four suggestions to spark our motivation.

Do at least one thing differently each class.

After we’ve taught a class several times, it’s easy to pull notes from a file and repeat what we did before. Our teaching will become stale after a while, though.

To avoid this situation, or to get out of it, do something different each class. As Flaherty observes, changes don’t have to be sustained or dramatic. Spruce up your overheads, add a relevant personal story to a lecture, do a demonstration in class, try a new instructional technology tool, cite different examples, use different readings, experiment with case studies. Change in itself can renew our interest in and our excitement about teaching.

Read about teaching.

Flaherty identifies three benefits of reading about teaching:

First, it alerts us to new ideas. “The literature on teaching is filled with strategies, approaches, tools, and philosophies that we can use to create a livelier, more engaged classroom environment.”

Second, it helps define us as a professional community. Specialized literature creates membership for its readers. This membership can “renew our pride in the teaching profession and our commitment to excel as teachers.”

Third, it exposes us to enthusiasm. The people who produce and write for teaching publications love their vocation and believe it makes a difference.

Write about teaching.

Writing helps us generate ideas, insights and fresh perspectives. Whether it’s in a private journal or published, the creative act of writing can motivate us.

Don’t take it too seriously.

According to Flaherty, if we focus on projecting an authoritative image, we’re not likely to try something new or unconventional. If a new approach doesn’t work, we probably haven’t ruined anyone’s life. And if it does work, we’ve made life a bit better for ourselves and our students. —JE

There is no substitute for active participation by learners, and the more the better. Put in an old-fashioned way, time on task is central to success in teaching and learning. When students give maximum focus and time to their studies, there is maximum success for them and for their teachers. Yet there is greater competition for students’ time than ever before. Students spend more time at jobs to support their educational expenses, and they also lead more adult lifestyles with a wider range of additional activities.

College professors have traditionally assumed that motivation to spend more time studying is a characteristic of good students. The post-secondary world has tolerated significant rates of non-completion or failure on the grounds that unmotivated students should not receive a college degree. Many faculty members argue that a earning a bachelor’s degree should indicate the presence of sufficient internal motivation to complete the rigors of a four-year curriculum.

It will not be easy to resolve the tension between changing student behavior and conventional faculty attitudes about responsibility. Instead, I think it is more useful to focus on a few things known about motivation that might inform the practices of teachers who want their students to achieve meaningful levels of comprehension, understanding and skill. In contemporary college teaching, successful teachers take an active role in motivating their students to spend time on learning instead of on other activities.

Motivation increases with the perception of likely success; people who expect success are more likely to invest time in any task than are people who believe there is a high chance for failure. When teachers provide students with support for learning and opportunities to revise work, students allocate more time to their studies. When students succeed early in a semester, they continue to give time to that instructor’s assignments, even when the requirements are challenging. Teachers who proudly inform students that few of them will succeed at a high level should expect that a majority of students will offer only minimal effort needed to obtain the poor outcome they have been told to expect.

Two concerns about motivating success should be mentioned. First, student success can be promoted without lowering standards. There are teaching techniques with a lengthy documented history of improving learning (such as mastery teaching or supplemental instruction), and some uses of technology show real promise for enhancing learning on a large scale. Second, external motivation can be added to students’ experience without diminishing their inherent interest in learning. Incentives for extra effort do not weaken internal motivation when they are included in a program that generates improvement and gives clear feedback on quality of performance.

College teachers are in the business of motivating student learning, whether we want to be or not. If student success in understanding your field is one of your goals, then please consider using CTE resources to identify ways to engage more student effort in learning.

**TEAM advises the Center for Teaching Excellence**

In many of CTE’s notices, readers see that our advisory board, the Teaching Excellence Advisory Members (TEAM), makes many decisions that guide the Center.

These faculty members are your TEAM representatives: Jeff Aubé, medicinal chemistry; Sharon Bass, journalism; Dan Bernstein, Center for Teaching Excellence; Bill Carswell, architecture; Ann Cudd, philosophy; Sandra Gaut, Provost’s Office; Chris Haufler, ecology and evolutionary biology; Dennis Prater, law; Suzanne Rice, education; Tony Rosenthal, history; Dan Spencer, business; and Paul Willhite, chemical and petroleum engineering.

Contact any of these colleagues if you have questions about TEAM or suggestions about CTE programs and activities.
CTE has announced the continuation of the Department Teaching Award program to recognize and honor academic departments on the Lawrence campus that are doing exemplary work to improve teaching and learning. In Spring 2003, a large department will be chosen for the $12,000 award.

In the announcement Dan Bernstein, CTE director, described why the Center has developed this award: The Center would like to encourage departments to engage in broadly based and sustained programs and activities that move toward ongoing development of student understanding. The award process is intended to gather examples of innovative, collaborative and effective intra-departmental initiatives, honor those that are well developed, and share those examples with other departments to further their development of teaching programs. The overall purpose of the award program is to support the development of department cultures that actively support effective teaching.

CTE’s advisory board will focus on three criteria when it selects this year’s recipient:
1. Evidence of department-wide faculty cooperation to create and nurture specific programs or initiatives that connect faculty members in support of teaching and student learning;
2. Evidence of broadly based reflection on and consideration of department’s teaching goals and objectives, including examples of goals for student understanding that reflect meaningful connections among courses;
3. Evidence of recent (within five years) innovations and sustained, department-wide efforts to implement the department’s educational vision, including descriptions of how the vision and teaching practices have been refined through examination of their results.

For 2003, large departments are invited to apply for the $12,000 award. These state funds may be used as the department chooses. (In 2004, a small department will be chosen for the award.)

The first step in the award process is for departments to submit a two to three-page Nominating Statement, due at CTE by November 15. To see complete information about the award, including definitions of large and small departments and examples of activities, check the CTE web site, www.ku.edu/~cte.

Exemplary work from classics, journalism
In their application for the 2002 Department Teaching Award, classics demonstrated that they value and expect high-end performance by students in their classes. Their faculty members engage students in complex cognitive tasks, even in large classes. They have made innovative uses of technology in their teaching. The quality of work their students completed has been recognized outside of class and, in some cases, outside the University. Overall, they showed that as a department they work together to keep student learning at the center of their activities.

Many more departments are doing exemplary work, and CTE looks forward to recognizing them through programs such as the Department Teaching Award.

From fall 1997 to fall 2000, journalism faculty worked together to change their curriculum from a traditional one to one that prepares students for a world of converged media of print, broadcast and the Web. As a School, they recognize the importance of teaching; it is a key part of their department’s mission and a critical factor in hiring decisions. In their application they demonstrated that they, like classics, value and expect high-end student performance in classes of all sizes.

Many more departments are doing exemplary work, and CTE looks forward to recognizing them through programs such as the Department Teaching Award.
Learning communities expected to enhance students’ academic success at KU

Next fall, KU will invite new freshmen to join one of 10 learning communities for the 2003–04 academic year. Approximately 200 students are expected to participate in the program.

Learning communities are defined as a cohort of students organized around a theme, research problem or academic interest. Learning communities are designed to:

• enhance educational opportunities for students across the curriculum;
• facilitate student connections to faculty, staff and fellow students;
• increase student retention; and
• enhance academic success.

This last benefit of learning communities may have the greatest impact on faculty. We often focus on our teaching and what we should and shouldn’t do when we consider student learning, but students’ experiences outside the classroom are powerful influences, too. As Menges and Weimer (1996) report, “Considerable research done in the past 20 years indicates that the quality, quantity, and type of students’ out-of-class experiences can directly and indirectly influence cognitive development (such as critical-thinking skills and the ability to synthesize and analyze); psychosocial development; attitudes and values; moral development; and perhaps most importantly, in-class learning, academic achievement, and retention” (p. 44).

Research at other universities with established learning communities shows students are more likely to succeed academically if they share an interest, major or goal; are co-enrolled in two or three of the same courses; and share a residential environment, a peer advisor and a faculty mentor.

Faculty who are interested in participating as mentors or who have ideas for interdisciplinary themes for these new learning communities may contact Diane Del Buono, OIRP, at 785-864-4412 or ddb@ku.edu, or Dan Bernstein, CTE, at 785-864-4193 or djb@ku.edu.


Faculty Fellows complete projects, report results

During 2001–02, four professors completed Faculty Fellowships with CTE. Mehrene Larudee, economics; Satya Mandal, mathematics; and Gina Westergard, design, participated in the program. Under a special arrangement, Cynthia Teel, nursing, also participated. Summaries of each project are given below.

This November, CTE will announce next year’s Faculty Fellows program. Watch for electronic information about it via your Ambassador, or check the CTE web site at www.ku.edu/~cte after November 15.

Mehrene Larudee’s project, “Actively Learning Economics,” had three components: case teaching, 3-D computer images and physical models for teaching microeconomic concepts, and classroom games to involve students and clarify concepts. Larudee reported that students’ assessments suggested all three methods have uses, with case teaching the best received.

For his project, “Multimedia Solutions to Math Exercises,” Satya Mandal developed interactive multimedia materials for two courses. He created an online homework package for students and incorporated multimedia illustrations and problem solutions into his online notes for the classes. Mandal reported that students’ responses have been very positive.

In “Developing Digital Lecture Presentations,” Gina Westergard created eight digital PowerPoint™ lectures for the Introduction to Design courses. Integrating technology into design basic studies classes will be a long-term benefit to students who take and faculty who teach these classes.

For “Improving Undergraduate Students’ Attitudes Toward Nursing Research,” Cynthia Teel developed a web-based collaboration between senior nursing students in Kansas City and their peers at a college in Canada. At the end of class, students reported a significant improvement in their attitudes about research, thus meeting Teel’s project goals.

4 • TEACHING MATTERS

GOOD WORK
Amnesty Day

Pregnant ferrets do get lost in dorm rooms … printers eat paper just as they use up the ink … humongous red face-rashes can erupt, causing fingers to balloon just as a student begins to write a paper … commuting students really could encounter a truck-load of spilled cottage cheese on K-10 … and it is true that sometimes young people are placed under house arrest without access to a computer or the library …

Even so, as instructors we would prefer to evaluate the excellence of work that is turned in rather than excuses sometimes offered by students in lieu of that work. One method which might help to keep the focus on teaching and to side-step the need to pass judgment on any non-academic circumstantial issue is to prohibit, across the board, all late assignments—softening this, however, with the offer of a single day of “academic amnesty” at some point in the semester.

Students would know from the beginning of the semester that the policy is: Due-dates are set in stone, no exceptions. But they are also told that on the academic amnesty day, they may turn in any and all late work—no questions asked—for evaluation, feedback and a grade, earning up to a certain percentage of the points possible the day that the work was originally due. The amnesty date and the percentage of possible late points can be determined in keeping with the instructor’s semester schedule and grading criteria. In channeling students’ creative energy and professors’ evaluative capacities into course work rather than judgment of rationales for missed due-dates, a stronger student-teacher partnership can develop … and a certain level of cynicism can be exorcised from the relationship.

—Leslie Reynard
Communication Studies

Vocal health for teachers

When vocal folds phonate (i.e., vibrate to produce sound), they collide fairly rapidly. During three minutes of continual, quiet conversation, females can experience from 30,000 to 45,000 vocal fold collisions, males from 15,000 to 22,500 collisions.

Teachers, generally a talkative lot, tend to use their voices athletically. They easily experience in excess of a million collisions a day.

Vocal fold swelling and irritation can be produced by upper respiratory viruses or infections, stress reactions, esophageal reflux (“heartburn”), allergies, inefficient coordination of muscles used in phonation, and too many forceful vocal fold collisions (speaking or laughing loudly, shouting or yelling). Symptoms may include sensations of rawness or tenderness, hoarseness, pain while speaking, a persistent need to clear the throat, vocal fatigue after 30 minutes of use, loss of some high pitches and gaining of some low pitches. In some cases, your voice simply goes on strike.

If you experience vocal distress, use these techniques:
1. Rest your voice as much as possible—no speaking, no whispering. When you need to meet your classes, implement strategies often suggested as ingredients of effective teaching: less teacher-talk, more student involvement; succinct verbalizations; student-led discussions or activities; use of multimedia. You might even consider synchronous online presentations or discussions where you can type rather than speak.
2. Maintain adequate hydration. Drink plenty of fluids, excluding alcoholic and caffeinated beverages, which can dry out vocal tissues. Avoid smoke of any sort. Increase fluid consumption when taking drying medications such as antihistamines and decongestants.
3. Resist the temptation to cough forcefully, clear your throat, whisper or gargle—all of which can further stress vocal cords.
4. Increase the humidity level of the air you breathe; 40–60% is ideal. Inhaling steam for five minutes every three hours can help.
5. Avoid anesthetic throat sprays or lozenges. They mask injuries and may encourage further abuse. Glycerin-based lozenges are best.

To care for your voice:
• Learn to use your voice efficiently with proper breath support and appropriate resonance.
• Avoid masking noises in your classroom. Speaking too close to noise from air conditioning or heating vents, windows that face traffic, or from electrical equipment or lights can cause you to phonate more strenuously.

(continued page 7)
Several ideas show up repeatedly in the research literature about how to motivate learners, and three are especially applicable to the use of electronic resources for instruction. The first emphasizes the importance of gaining and holding on to student attention, the second focuses on the relevance of course content to the “real world,” and the third stresses the role of student confidence in motivation. How can we use the various technologies available to our students to take advantage of these ideas?

Gaining student attention is not terribly difficult. As humans, we’re all attracted to unfamiliar stimuli, and we can use this novelty effect to our students’ advantage by providing a variety of materials—in class and out—that stimulate the senses. Holding on to attention, however, requires a careful balance between the unexpected and the potentially distracting. The judicious use of color to highlight specific areas of a graphic, audio clips to accompany visuals, or short video clips to display processes can all be used to hold on to student attention without exposing students to “PowerPoint™ Poisoning,” at which point attention (and motivation) disappear. Instructors must first identify the key concepts learners should attend to, then determine how they might draw attention to those ideas with carefully selected media.

Another important key to motivation is helping students to see the connection between what they’re learning and the world beyond the classroom. The Web can help to build this sense of relevance by providing access to current ideas, up-to-the-minute news, and research reports that might otherwise be delayed by more traditional publishing avenues. Obviously, the Web also provides access to inaccurate, outdated and biased documents, as well, but providing students with the skills to evaluate these materials and determine their value extends simple comprehension of course content into higher order thinking. If students are expected to find examples (good or bad) of how the concepts they’re learning have been utilized by others, they’ll begin to see the links between abstract ideas and concrete application of those ideas. This can be a powerfully motivating experience and one that will keep students engaged in studying material that might otherwise be considered uninspiring, when considered in isolation.

Early examples of computer-assisted instruction often were simply drill-and-practice programs that helped create a foundation of basic declarative knowledge (the multiplication table, for example) from which students would later draw to learn more advanced topics. While hardly motivational in themselves, the programs did demonstrate an idea that has since been championed as a motivating force: self-confidence. The computer, however it is utilized, can be an infinitely patient tutor and provide an environment in which learners may try out newfound skills and knowledge in a relatively non-threatening manner. Several KU faculty are using Blackboard™ to provide students with practice quizzes or homework exercises that encourage them to keep up with their reading, while also providing feedback about their progress. Knowing that they’re “getting it” is highly motivational and can be helpful information for the instructor, as well.

If you’re considering using these techniques to enhance student motivation in your courses, give IDS a call at 4-2600. We’ll be happy to work with you on ways to gain and hold student attention, emphasize the relevance of course content to the “real world,” and enhance students’ confidence in their abilities.

SUMMARY
Three reasons to use electronic resources to increase motivation:
1. Attention: Identify key concepts then draw attention to them with carefully selected media such as graphics, audio clips or video clips.
2. Relevance: Connect what students are learning in the classroom with the “real world” via the Web.
3. Self-confidence: Give students practice quizzes or homework exercises in a non-threatening manner through programs such as Blackboard™.
Motivation involves processes that occur as individuals begin and sustain goal-directed actions (Pintrich and Schunk, 2002). In education, motivation is a key element of all teaching and learning.

To help teachers analyze how motivation functions as a phenomenon in their classroom, John Biggs (1999) identifies four types of motivation and students’ values within each type.

**Extrinsic motivation**—What the outcome produces. Students do work because they value the outcome (i.e., the grade). Students don’t focus on learning; instead, they perform to obtain a reward or to avoid a punishment. This type of motivation, Biggs says, “is a standing invitation to students to adopt a surface approach” (p. 59). If students question why they need to know material and teachers answer because it will be on the test, learning is devalued.

**Intrinsic motivation**—The process of doing it. As other researchers have done, Biggs points out that intrinsic motivation is often tied to previous success. If a student arrives in your science class with several previous successes in science classes, that student will probably arrive already motivated. Teachers have little control over this type of motivation. Biggs remarks, “You cannot require students to be intrinsically motivated, except by teaching properly” (p. 70). For him, proper teaching involves building students’ knowledge bases, helping students achieve significant success, and giving them some ownership over their learning. If we do that, he says that intrinsic motivation follows as night follows day (p. 61).


**Social motivation**—What other people value. Students are learning because they want to please other people whose opinions they value, whether it’s their family or, to some degree, society in general. Sometimes this kind of motivation has a positive affect in the classroom, if the teacher becomes someone students admire and want to please. It’s unclear whether this type of motivation contributes to deep learning, however.

**Achievement motivation**—The opportunity for ego enhancement. Here, “students may learn in order to enhance their egos by competing against other students and beating them. It makes them feel good about themselves” (p. 59–60). This type of motivation often results in deep learning, since students must know material well if they are to succeed. The competitive environment will have a chilling effect on the classroom climate at some point, though, because students are seen as competitors not colleagues. Biggs also notes that “more students are turned off and work less well under competitive conditions than those who are turned on and work better” (p. 60).

**SUMMARY**

Students are influenced by different types of motivation: extrinsic, social, achievement and intrinsic. What students value determines the type of motivation at work in their learning.

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**Vocal health for teachers** (continued from page 5)

- Do not pitch your speaking voice too low.
- Be aware that esophageal reflux (“heartburn”) can cause vocal fold inflammation.
- Warm up your voice daily. Let gentle, buzzy hums or lip trills, descending resonant sighs or yawns, etc. become part of your morning shower routine.
- Balance voice use time with voice rest time.

See your physician if any of these three conditions exist: First, if vocal problems last for more than seven days, despite rest and home remedies. Second, if you have persistent hoarseness. Hoarseness is often the first sign of a problem more serious than an upper respiratory infection. Third, if your voice exhibits a pronounced and ongoing breathy quality in any parts of your speaking voice range.

—James Daugherty, Music & Dance
Eighteen ways to motivate your students

In Teaching at Its Best, Linda Nilson identifies 18 ways to motivate students:

1. Deliver presentations with enthusiasm and energy. Displaying your motivation motivates your students.
2. Make the course personal. Give reasons why you’re interested in the material, and make it relevant to students. Show how the subject fits into the big picture and how it contributes to society. By doing this, you’ll be a role model for student interest and involvement.
3. Get to know your students—their majors, interests and backgrounds. This information will help you adapt material to your students’ concerns, and your interest in them will inspire loyalty to you.
4. Give students some voice in determining what the course will cover. If they have input, they will be more responsible for their own learning.
5. Use examples and case studies freely. This makes the class real-world to your students.
6. Use various presentation methods to accommodate various learning styles.
7. Teach by discovery whenever possible. Students find reasoning through a problem and discovering the underlying principle to be satisfying and intrinsically motivating.
8. Use a variety of active learning methods such as discussions, debates, press conferences, symposia, role playing, simulations, problem-based learning, case studies, writing, etc. These activities engage students in the material and give them opportunities to master it for achievement’s sake.
9. Use cooperative learning, which is student-active and provides positive, motivating social interactions.
10. Make material accessible. Explain it in common language and avoid jargon when possible.
11. Emphasize conceptual understanding above rote memorization. Facts are means to a goal—to construct broader concepts—not goals themselves.
12. Set realistic performance goals and help students achieve these by encouraging them to set their own reasonable goals. Striving to exceed their personal best will be a powerful motivator for students.
13. Design assignments that are appropriately challenging based on your students’ experience and aptitude. Assignments that are too easy or much too difficult are counter-productive.
14. Place appropriate emphasis on testing and grading. Make tests fair. Tests should show students what they have mastered, not what they haven’t.
15. Accentuate the positive, especially in grading. Acknowledge improvement. Negative comments should pertain to particular performances (i.e. “this paper”), not the performer (“your writing”).
16. Use humor when appropriate. A joke or humorous anecdote lightens the mood and can enhance learning. Just be sensitive to the context, setting and audience.
17. Foster communication in both directions. Convey your expectations, but also ask for student feedback.
18. Appeal to extrinsic motivators. Inform students about careers in your discipline and how your course prepares students for these opportunities. Whenever possible, link new knowledge to its usefulness in some occupation.