

Challenge 3: Reaching and Engaging Today's Learners
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Key Questions:

- How has a life of constant connectivity and mobility changed today's students?
- What approaches work best for engagement in the classroom?
- What are the opportunities? What are the challenges?

Participant Comments and Reflections:

Tech-savvy students can help the instructor with the tools

Text based teaching is boring if students don't use them

20 somethings are tech savvy, but other groups are not. Have expert students teach non experts

Their need for instant info means that deep research is problematic.

Interesting presentations!

Should we ban laptops in class? (ADA considerations)

Not all students have same tech capacity e.g. fancy cell phones with SMS

Let's keep students on their computers by changing assignments (student react by bring laptops less)

Poor writing vs. Spelling (outline out front)

Cell phone disruptions: faculty can confiscate

Students are the customers ... they want it easy

Need to make assignments significant

Many are there for promotion (only)

Making connections easier f2f

Student expectations differ from instructors expectations i.e. why there?

Get students out of the classroom. How?

How to engage students in own learning? Make learning significant?

Library has same issue students want librarians to do the research

It's harder to have relationship with students if we don't see them too often

Are students really different?

Many students work. Challenges: competing for their time.

Students have more distractions. How do students focus?

Many students come in with attitude of 'what is on the test'. Does this reflect their exposure to high stakes testing in elementary or secondary school. How do we turn this around?

Levels of granularity are important in this discussion (generalizations are problematic): e.g. What type of student? Are they coming out of workforce or high school? Major of the student? Philosophy vs. media students?

Possible solutions:

- Instead of discussion boards, try video blogging. Student engaging with supportive real-world examples
- Or... use wiki to have students create questions... then pick out right answers and also critique why the wrong answers are wrong
- More non assessment feedback from peers and/or self reflection (not graded)
- More real engaging activities (not artificial). Real world is good
- Interact with professionals in the field as well as with fellow students (e.g. dental school)
- Use blogs to write sentences or short stories
- Go to SL for language learning (e.g French islands to learn French)

Student Perspectives

- Making something immediately relevant is important to be cool. Online interaction and communicating with people on the other side of the world is also very cool.
- What about the trade off of immediate feedback vs. confidence in the answer? Immediate is pretty important.
- Students want interesting presentations. From whom? A: each other AND the professor.
- The standards are being set by Facebook & YouTube. Lecturing day in and out will not cut it.
- Students also ask for content (website , etc) before they get to class.
- Students will use blackboard even if faculty do not to contact one another, access to resources, even student discussions (e.g. office hours online at 9am).
- Students say they are not a fan of blackboard find it distracting as there are better tools out there. [sometimes the tools distract because they are clunky.]