

Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching Iowa State University

August, 2005

University Teaching Seminar

Corly Brooke, Director and Professor of Human Development and Family Studies
294-2402, cbrooke@iastate.edu

Corly's top fifteen suggestions for managing the first week of class in order to enhance the learning environment:

1. Visit the classroom early and try out the technology, microphone, lights, etc. Classroom services at ITC will help you with this if you call them for an appointment, 294-8026. Locate bathrooms, drinking fountain, pencil sharpener, closest office in the building, storage if needed, etc.
2. Project a welcoming PowerPoint or overhead that identifies the course and instructor as students are arriving.
3. Arrive early, greet students as they arrive or be available to chat with a few of them.
4. Remember that research shows that students form their opinions about the instructor and the class in the first 15 minutes. So be organized, plan this carefully and let the enthusiasm you have for your field become evident to the students.
5. Clearly state your learning outcomes for the course and your expectations of the students in order to succeed in the course. You may want to mention why you think the course is relevant to their lives and their learning.
6. Clearly stress classroom procedures that are important to you. (Expectations for attendance, arriving on time, staying until the end, class discussion and active participation, respect, grading policies, plagiarism, etc.)
7. Provide an organized, clear syllabus that details learning outcomes, expectations, procedures, timeline, etc.

8. Share some information that will personalize you – your teaching experience, your family, an anecdote from your undergraduate learning days, or whatever you are comfortable with self-disclosing. If you have graduate teaching assistants, introduce them and let them tell something about themselves.
9. Set up clear communication strategies for the students. These could include office hours, e-mail parameters, phone policies, chat rooms, question/comment box small groups, etc.
10. Do at least one interactive activity and open discussion each day, beginning on the first day so it is a clear expectation and engages the students right away.
11. Come out from behind the podium or desk and move about the room into the students' learning space.
12. Work to learn the students' names. Pictures from Access Plus really help with this. I make notes on them and review them for 10 minutes before every class, hoping to learn new names each time.
13. Ask questions and WAIT for answers. It is often better to ask students to write responses first, discuss with a partner, and then share with the class. Strive to ask higher-level questions rather than yes/no questions or rhetorical questions. (compare and contrast ideas, value judgments, similarities and differences, hypothesize, react to anecdotes or case studies, etc)
14. Review main points (big ideas) from the last class at the beginning of each new class along with expectations for readings, assignments, etc. And strive to end each class with a hook or forecast for the next class period.
15. Ask for volunteers for a small student feedback group. Meet regularly with this smaller group to discuss how the class can be enhanced. At the least, be sure to use formative, mid-semester evaluations to get feedback on how to improve the course.

Have fun and remember, there are a lot of us in this together, so ask for help and share your experiences! Contact CELT at 294-5357 or celt@iastate.edu.