A Teaching Method that Boosts UNLV Student Retention

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Transparent Instruction Boosts UNLV Retention

Nationally, underserved students are half as likely to graduate in 4 years as their white and Asian peers (US DoE 2014, Tough 2014, Ishitani 2006). UNLV proudly claims the most diverse undergraduate university population in the nation (US News 2017), including many first generation and low-income students. The majority of UNLV students fall into this underserved category, and our retention rates (re-enrollment rates after the 1st year) indicate that roughly ¼ of our 1st-year students do not return for their sophomore year, which is higher than the national average. A national study showed two revised assignments improved student success significantly (Winkelmes et al 2016).

Higher Retention rates for UNLV students who receive transparent instruction

Transparent instruction boosts two important predictors of student success nationally, with significant gains for all students and greater gains for underserved students: confidence and sense of belonging (Winkelmes 2016).

Higher “Success Predictors” for Students across the US

Transparent instruction boosts two important predictors of student success nationally, with significant gains for all students and greater gains for underserved students: confidence and sense of belonging (Winkelmes 2016).

Examples and Resources

Higher Retention rates for UNLV students who receive transparent instruction

Examples and Resources available from TILT Higher Ed are free and downloadable, including:

- Slides and videos
- Sample assignments from multiple disciplines
- Publications
- Templates for transparent assignment design
- Self-guided checklist for transparent assignment design
- Example of various ways to offer transparent instruction
- Survey tools and free confidential reports to measure the impact on your students
- Student handout to frame class conversations about academic work

Small Teaching Changes with Big Impact on Student Success

- Revise two existing assignments in a course to make them more transparent, using this Self-guided Checklist and this Framework for Discussion with Students. A national study showed two revised assignments improved student success significantly (Winkelmes et al Peer Review 2016)
- Look at examples of transparent assignments across the disciplines: TILT Higher Ed Examples and Resources
- Apply transparent instruction to the syllabus.
- Follow UNLV faculty examples for providing transparent instruction exams
- Rubrics for grading
- Offer multiple successful examples so students don’t cling to just one too closely
- Try any of a variety of transparent methods, beyond assignment design:
  - Invite students to participate in class planning, agenda construction
  - Gauge students’ understanding during class via peer work on questions that require students to apply concepts you’ve taught
  - Explicitly connect “how people learn” data with course activities when students struggle at difficult transition points
  - Engage students in applying the grading criteria that you’ll use on their work
  - Debrief graded tests and assignments in class
  - Offer running commentary on class discussions, to indicate what modes of thought or disciplinary methods are in use

Citations