A Teaching Method that Boosts UNLV Student Retention

Celeste Calkins
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Mary-Ann Winkelmes
University of Nevada, Las Vegas, mary-ann.winkelmes@unlv.edu

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The practice and the need it addresses

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 an underserved category, and our retention rates indicate that roughly ¼ of our 1st-year students do not re-enroll the subsequent year.

Higher Retention rates for UNLV students who receive transparent instruction

UNLV faculty boosted student success and retention by using this framework to discuss academic work with students.

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). UNLV faculty boosted student success by using this framework to discuss academic work with students.

Higher Retention rates for UNLV students who receive transparent instruction

Higher “Success Predictors” for Students across the US

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:

The Practice:

UNLV faculty boosted student success and retention by using this framework to discuss academic work with students.

Examples and Resources

- Downloadable, including:
  - Survey tools and free confidential reports to measure the impact on your students
  - Self-guided checklist for transparent assignment design
  - Templates for transparent assignment design
  - Sample assignments from multiple disciplines
  - Slides and videos
  - Publications

How other UNLV teachers might adopt this practice

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
- Follow UNLV faculty examples for providing transparent instruction exams
- Apply transparent instruction to the syllabus
- Follow UNLV faculty examples for providing transparent instruction exams
- 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 during 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

- Tough, Paul. 2014. “Who Gets to Graduate?”
- Tough, Paul. 2014. “Who Gets to Graduate?”