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Building Relationships for UNLV Students' Success

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Building Relationships for UNLV Students' Success

The practice and the need it addresses

Instructor-Student Meetings

One Key Relationship:

Racially diverse, first-generation students gain more from one key relationship with an instructor or administrator than from money spent on typical support services (Bensimon, 2007). Instructors can strive to build this relationship with their students by meeting one-on-one for 3-5 minutes outside of class.

"Selling" the Meeting:

- Ask students to sign-up to meet in a common location (e.g., library coffee shop) at the end of the first class session.
- Explain the purpose of the meeting is to get to know them and answer questions about the course.
- Meet with students the first two weeks of class.

Conducting the Meeting:

Structure the meeting around two questions:

- (1) Please tell me a little about yourself, e.g., how would you describe yourself as a student?
- (2) Do you have any questions about our course, e.g., what is this course and why is it required?

Interpersonal Interactions are Key:

This meeting will help guide your future in-class interactions. Your relationship can also influence their classroom and overall college experience.

Evidence this practice benefits UNLV Students

Assessment Data and Growth

Assessment:

Assessment data for First and Second-Year Seminar courses (FYS/SYS) with these meetings indicate students were

- satisfied to very satisfied with faculty respect for students ($M = 5.20$ FYS, 5.07 SYS), quality of instruction ($M = 5.11$ FYS, 4.98 SYS), and availability of faculty for office appointments ($M = 5.11$ FYS, 5.07 SYS)
- neutral to satisfied with faculty concern for each student as an individual ($M = 4.98$ FYS, 4.89 SYS) and their informal contact with faculty in non-academic settings ($M = 4.76$ FYS, 4.72 SYS) on a 6-point Likert scale.



Program Growth:

The College of Education FYS/SYS program has also grown exponentially over the past few years with total enrollment increasing from 278 students in fall 2015, to 344 students in spring 2016, to 450 students in fall 2016. Nearly all of the College of Education FYS/SYS instructors conduct this practice.

Resources and where to find them

Select Resources

Valuing Relationships:

Bensimon, E. M. (2007). The underestimated significance of practitioner knowledge in the scholarship of student success. *The Review of Higher Education*, 30(4), 441-469.

Slife, B. D. (2004). Taking practice seriously: Toward a relational ontology. *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology*, 24(2), 157 - 178.

Teaching:

Reber, J. (2011). The underexamined life: A proposal for critically evaluating teachers' and students' philosophies of teaching. *College Teaching*, 59, 102-110.

Svinicki, M. D., McKeachie, W. J., & Nicol, D. (2012). *McKeachie's teaching tips: Strategies, research, and theory for college and university teachers* (14th ed.). Boston, MA, United States: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.



How other UNLV teachers might adopt this practice

Applicability & Potential Challenges

This practice is extremely translatable across academic disciplines because it is not discipline specific.

- These meetings can occur in any discipline or field of study.
- Students benefit just as much in a math or statistics course as they do in a first-year seminar or women's studies course because they typically become more comfortable with the instructor and thus more likely to ask questions or seek help.
- Instructors benefit from better understanding the student's history with the subject matter and interpersonal style.
- The location and timing of the meeting can change to fit instructor style. Instead of meeting during the first two weeks of class in a coffee shop, instructors can slowly meet with their students across the entire semester in their office, or around mid-terms or study week in another location.

Potential Challenges:

- Meeting with every student during the first two weeks can be very time consuming.
- Students can "no show" to the meeting, which involves more time to reschedule and meet again.
- Students not used to meeting one-on-one with faculty.