Teaching

A series of practical and innovative teaching tips for college faculty *No. 15*

The Top 10…

Ways to End Your Course

How do you end your course? Most of us spend time working out the best ways to start a course because we know first impressions are crucial. Fewer of us remember that **last impressions are equally important**. Leaving your students with a clear focus on what you consider most important, and providing an emotional ending both leave a lasting impression.

- ✓ What do you want your students to **remember most about the course content**? Give students 5 minutes to write, anonymously, what they consider to be the $3 - 5$ most important concepts. Collect and list so all can see. Lead a short discussion, including sharing what **you** consider most important (if there is wide disparity, revise your course to better focus next time on what you want students to remember).

- ✓ What do you want your students to **remember about themselves?** Perhaps you teach a course that includes affective outcomes. List those outcomes and ask students to reflect upon how much they have changed, what hasn't changed, and why. Analyze the "why" comments for hints about how to modify your course for more impact next time.

- ✓ Do you want **to inspire your students** to continue, do more, work hard, and change their lives for the better? Give each one an inspirational quotation, with a little "thanks for taking the course" or "thanks for contributing to the success of our class" from you.

- ✓ Have students write a "**letter to next semester's students**" telling them how to get the best possible grade in your course. Promise anonymity by having them hand their letters to a trusted student who merely checks their name off. Make several packets for next semester's students and/or scan them and place them on the course site. Review what students wrote to see if there are any "holes" in your course that you do not intend!

- ✓ Tell students what **you have learned** during the course. What better insights do you have as a teacher, what have you learned about your subject? At the same time, you might tell your students what teaching them has meant to you.

- ✓ If you use consistent small groups regularly for class projects, have group members write a letter of reference **for each other**, highlighting what the person sees as the strengths of the other group member. The recipient gets feedback regarding their strengths as a team member, and the writer engages in critical reflection.

- ✓ Perhaps now is the time to practice the **higher order thinking skill of application.** Have students identify 3 things they have learned that they are either already applying in their life, or will soon. This is especially important if you are teaching a General Education required course.

- ✓ Have students complete a **self-examination of how they performed in class, with no relation to your grading**. What did they do well, what did they do poorly? Perhaps your prompt is "what would you do differently in this class if you were starting over, and what would you not change?"

- ✓ Get a final **feedback on your teaching** by having students anonymously reply to the prompt "Two things you (the instructor) do that help me learn are". As an alternative, ask your students to use their critical thinking skills to **analyze the course** (after all, if we teach critical thinking skills it is only fair to have students apply those skills to something important to them).

- ✓ If you gave a pre-test, **give a post-test** so students (and you") can measure their own progress. If you didn't do a pre-test connected directly to the course outcomes, consider doing so in the future.

BONUS!

- ✓ Bring in food, or even better have them bring in food. Shake everyone's hand and thank that person for taking your course. Tell students how much you appreciate their hard work. Create a class video of "top 10 tips for succeeding in [the course]". Ask 2 – 3 students to come to the first class next semester to talk directly with new students about how to best succeed in your course.