Crowd Control: Promoting Civility in the Classroom

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Abstract: In recent years, faculty have seen an increase in latecomers, sleepers, cell phone addicts, and downright disruptive students in their courses. This presentation examines the literature on classroom incivility, summarizes a faculty survey on strategies to manage disruptive student behaviors, and proposes practical measures to prevent disturbances. Participants will engage in guided discussion assessing the scope and causes of classroom incivilities, then focus on instructional strategies to prevent incivility and, when necessary, deal with disruptive students. Participants will examine syllabi, classroom “ground rules,” rubrics, and assessment techniques as tools to communicate expectations.

Objectives

Upon completion of the session, participants will be able to:
1. Define and describe classroom incivility
2. Recognize reasons for the increase in incivility
3. Develop strategies to communicate classroom expectations and prevent disruptive behaviors
4. Apply intervention practices to address and document incivility

Description

This presentation addresses the issue of classroom incivility by focusing on (1) practical strategies to prevent disruptions and (2) interventions to deal with unacceptable student behaviors. In 1998, The Chronicle of Higher Education reported that some courses are being hijacked by “classroom terrorists” who disrupt the teaching and learning process (Schneider, 1998). These disruptive actions include arriving late, leaving early, talking/texting on cell phones, talking loudly during lectures, sleeping, eating, cheating, plagiarizing, coming unprepared to class, making sarcastic comments, and a myriad of other inattentive, disrespectful behaviors. According to the literature, junior, adjunct, and female faculty report the highest incidences of immature and inattentive behaviors (Boice, 1992; Sorcinelli, 1994). Teaching assistants also experience high occurrences of rude, inappropriate classroom behavior.

The presenters will synthesize scholarly literature on classroom incivility, including examples of course syllabi, honor codes, interaction “ground rules,” grading rubrics, and classroom management strategies. Materials to prevent incivility are all designed to communicate classroom expectations and actively engage students in a positive learning environment.

In addition, one of the presenters (B. Frey) will summarize a study with Indiana University of Pennsylvania faculty \( (n = 228) \) which noted the following disruptive behaviors as most common (Black, Wygonik & Frey, in press):
1. Arriving late and leaving early
2. Talking to others at inappropriate times
3. Text messaging
4. Packing or unpacking backpacks
5. Eating
6. Letting phone ring
7. Sleeping
8. Using laptops for unrelated tasks

Furthermore, faculty noted these strategies for managing disruptive behaviors:
- 68%: Speak privately to student offender
- 51%: Address the entire class
- 42%: Pause lecture until disruption clears
- 39%: Speak publicly to student offender(s)
- 10%: Ignore the problem
- 10%: Raise voice above disruptive incident
- 7%: Send email to offender(s)
The survey results indicated the following significant relationships:

1. Positive correlation between female faculty respondents and seriousness of disruptive behavior
2. Negative correlation between faculty member’s status and seriousness of disruptive classroom behavior
3. Negative correlation between instructor’s amount of training and frequency of disruptive behaviors

The survey administered in this study is available at: http://www.iup.edu/page.aspx?id=84328

If there is time, the session facilitators will lead discussion on a classroom incivility case study. One conflict resolution model (UNC Managing Classroom Conflict) consists of the following six steps: stop the activity, think of outcomes, assess the situation, react to the comments, use active listening, and prepare for the next time.

Discussion Questions

1. What are the major classroom disruptions that faculty face?
2. What are the causes of incivility in the classroom?
3. What are some examples of instructional strategies that can promote civility?

References


Engaging Voices, Sharing Ideas: Digital Storytelling in the University Classroom

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Abstract: This practice session will demonstrate the ways digital storytelling can be used in university classrooms to engage student voices and share ideas about a variety of subjects. Digital stories combine multimedia, a strong authorial perspective, and personal or academic experiences into a fluid digital narrative. Participants will view sample digital stories from a university course in Education and Cultural Diversity, discuss ways to incorporate digital stories into their pedagogy or curriculum, practice the steps for creating digital stories, and learn technological skills to improve the storytelling process.

Literature Review

Storytelling, some would argue, is man’s oldest form of communication and the core of human interaction. In today’s technological world, then, digital storytelling is a way to incorporate the centuries-old tradition of sharing stories with contemporary multimedia in a way that demonstrates personal perspectives on a range of important issues. In brief, a digital story is “a short, first person video-narrative created by combining recorded voice, still and moving images, and music or other sounds” (Center for Digital Storytelling, 2010), an innovation that developed from a collaboration of artists, practitioners, and scholars in San Francisco in the early 1990s. Since then, various centers have developed at private institutions and universities around the country, and educators have learned the value of combining storytelling and technology in classroom practice (e.g. Emory University, 2010; The Ohio State University, 2010; University of Maryland, Baltimore County, 2010; University of Houston, 2010). In particular, universities have realized that digital stories “can serve as a bridge” between disciplines and generations and allow students to “experiment with self-representation… think critically… [and] develop a discerning eye for online resources, increasing their technology and media literacy” (Educause, 2007). The importance of including student voice and dialogue in the classroom (e.g. Freire, 1970; Ladson-Billings) and the need for media literacy (e.g. Alvermann & Hagood, 2000; Kellner & Share, 2005) have both been well-documented in research literature; as an effective pedagogical combination of the two methods, digital storytelling is a practice that merits inclusion in university curriculum.

Goals and Objectives

Participants in this session will review the history of the digital storytelling movement and discuss its emergence as a pedagogical tool at university campuses around the country. They will then evaluate samples of student work from an undergraduate course, Education and Cultural Diversity, and consider how faculty or students at their institutions could utilize digital storytelling in their courses. This could include using digital stories as an introduction to professors’ research or personal history; an introduction to course content; student-produced research; or summative assessments. Further, the group will learn methods for creating digital stories—such as using I-movie, Camtasia, video recordings, photography, music mixing, or original artwork—and methods for disseminating and sharing digital stories with the university community. At the conclusion of the session, participants will have learned the five basic steps of creating a digital story (Brainstorm; Script; Storyboard; Gather Assets; Edit and Produce) and will have begun development on their own digital story.

Description of Practice

I will model the creation of a digital story, a first-person narrative that combines recorded voice with other multimedia. I will first show samples of my students’ digital stories and allow participants to analyze the students’ work: What did they learn about the storyteller? What did they learn about the topic? How are the storyteller and the topic related? How was technology used? How was “voice” used? Then, I will walk the participants through the five steps of creating a digital story. First we will brainstorm, or create a list of potential ideas for their own digital story. Then, we will script, or generate a bulleted list of points to cover in a recording; I will point out that a digital story is meant to sound “authentic,” so the speaker should not read directly from a script, but should use it as a guide. Next, I will explain the process of storyboarding, where one visually illustrates the story with images and audio. Then, we will discuss gathering assets, including how to find images, video, and other resources online. Finally, I will briefly demonstrate the process of editing and producing a digital story using either Windows or Macintosh software.
Discussion

As an education scholar, I teach courses about privilege, power, and oppression in education; often, our discussions focus on issues of “voice”—whose voices are heard, whose are silenced, and why. In teaching a course on Education and Cultural Diversity, I decided to extend the course theme of voice to the students’ final project: a digital story about an issue in education about which they felt strongly. Throughout the course, we built in small deadlines that lead to a final “viewing party” in which students showcased their work. Student-selected topics included the school-to-prison pipeline, the English-only movement, multicultural education, and urban educational reform; stories were informed by class readings, discussions, tutoring, outside research, and personal experience. The final products showcased students’ critical and thoughtful analysis of important issues, and their end-of-semester evaluations indicated that they felt that producing their digital story was an educative, entertaining, and meaningful experience. As one student commented, “This is so much better than a PowerPoint presentation. I feel like I am sitting down with someone, hearing [their] personal story. Plus, it was fun to produce. I will remember this for a long time.”

References


Implementation of Capstone Requirements in Diverse Departments

Cindy Wood, Animal and Poultry Sciences, Virginia Tech
Carolyn Rader, Career Services, Virginia Tech
Diane Zahm, Urban Affairs and Planning, Virginia Tech
Marie Paretti, Engineering Education, Virginia Tech

Abstract: Capstone experiences are designed to provide students the opportunity to integrate knowledge and learned abilities within—and sometimes across—discipline and were included as one way of reinventing undergraduate education by the Boyer Commission (1998). Implementation of capstone requirements, however, can be challenging. We will share three models in use in three colleges at Virginia Tech. Animal and Poultry Sciences (APSC), with more than 500 students, chose to include a variety of ways for students to complete their capstone experiences. Urban Affairs and Planning (UAP), with 175 students, has had a capstone requirement in place since 1997 and uses community project-based studio courses for its capstone requirement. In the Materials Science & Engineering (MSE) and Engineering Science & Mechanics (ESM) departments, teams of students develop, plan, and execute an open-ended project during a two-semester course sequence. Parallel to these efforts, Career Services has a program that offers credit to students who complete a full-time, paid internship. Interacting with the audience, we will discuss some of the challenges encountered during the formation, implementation, and management of the capstone requirements. Undergraduate presenters will give their perspectives, and we will also present a possible linkage between capstones and career services.

Literature Review

Capstone experiences can be found across disciplines and across institutions (Hauhart and Grahe, 2010; Chamblee and Morgan, 2009; Keefe et al., 2007; McGoldrick, 2008). Despite differences in structure, resource allocation, and other details, most capstones share very similar goals: integrating knowledge acquired during a student’s academic career; contributing to students’ future roles as informed citizens; improving writing and interpersonal skills; and even assessing the major (Beyl, 2010). Given the current climate, however, fulfilling the potential of capstones calls for creativity in designing, implementing, assessing and improving capstone experiences.

Goals and Objectives for the Practice Session

This practice session will focus on several aspects of the capstone experience: what they are (and aren’t), where and how they fit in a curriculum, and assessment. To lay the groundwork for an interactive, “thinking outside the box” discussion of the capstone experience, three models currently in use by four departments at Virginia Tech will be presented, including student perspectives. A potential link with a Career Services program designed to maximize the benefits of a full time paid internship will also be described. The remainder of the session will be devoted to brainstorming possible solutions to challenges inherent in capstone experiences.

Description of the Practice to be Modeled

Animal and Poultry Sciences

Each APSC student must complete a capstone experience. The experience can take a wide variety of forms, but must meet specific parameters, including: (1) taken within 45 credits of graduation; (2) minimum of two credits; (3) 4xxx or 5xxx level course; (4) approval obtained no later than the term prior to undertaking the capstone experience. Upon completion of the capstone experience, students will have integrated new skills and knowledge with those previously attained by completing a major project and accomplishing at least five of the following seven learning objectives: (1) analyze, interpret, and synthesize information from a variety of sources; (2) solve “real-world” problems in “real-world” situations; (3) improve verbal, visual, and written communication skills; (4) practice critical thinking skills; (5) be a contributing member to a team effort; (6) gain an understanding of the “bigger picture”; and (7) enhance self-confidence and preparation for a career and/or post-baccalaureate education.
Materials Science & Engineering (MSE) and Engineering Science & Mechanics (ESM)

Capstone experiences for engineering students are mandated by ABET, Inc., the international accrediting body, and they are intended to provide “a major design experience based on the knowledge and skills acquired in earlier course work and incorporating appropriate engineering standards and multiple realistic constraints.” The structure of these courses varies somewhat by institution and program, though there are common trends. In both MSE and ESM at Virginia Tech (as well as several other departments here), the experience is a two-semester sequence in which students work in teams to develop, plan, and execute an extended open-ended project in their chosen field. The projects are intended to demonstrate all 11 of the ABET, Inc.-defined outcomes for engineering students. Individual assessment includes a series of reports and presentations throughout the project at major milestones; programmatic assessment includes expert review of the entire project portfolio.

Urban Affairs and Planning (UAP)

UAP offers two liberal arts-based pre-professional programs, in public and urban affairs, and in environmental policy and planning. The focus of these majors—planning and policy—necessarily requires that students understand the complex nature of real problems involving real people in real places. At the time of graduation the expectation is that students will have the knowledge and skills they need to work as professionals, that they have achieved the learning objectives we have developed for the program. The learning objectives fall into five basic areas: (1) written, spoken and visual communications; (2) data analysis and research methods; (3) plan and policy development and evaluation; (4) community/stakeholder engagement; and (5) project management and group processes. The capstone courses, a studio and a seminar, are both community project-based, allowing for integration of the full array of learning objectives into a single course.

Career Services

The Career Services Cooperative Education / Internship Program is an undergraduate academic program designed to incorporate real world work experience and learning into the student's college academic experience. The program is a partnership among the undergraduate student, the employer and Virginia Tech - represented by Career Services and the academic departments. Each partner has responsibility to be honest and ethical. Each student represents not only him or herself, but also her/his academic department and the university. Conduct and performance should be of the highest standards. Co-ops and internships give students educationally-related work and learning experience that integrates theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skill development on the job, and contributes to the development of personal and professional maturity and ethics. The coursework involved within the program gears a student’s thought process toward future employment, preparing them to identify their interests and skills which they learned during their experience, as well as articulating those skills during an interview.

References


Teachers Who Inspire

Gloria Howell, Psychology, Blue Ridge Community College

Abstract: Contemporary students have a robust sense of entitlement, are diverse, unique, technosavvy and worldly, creative and talented, confident and demanding. They miss deadlines, have excuses, they question and challenge. In this practice session you will learn to teach responsibility by designing firm but fair policies concerning attendance, missed exams, and late assignments and learn the “no excuses” technique for grading subjective assignments. Inspire your students to look forward to coming to class with the strategies you learn, demonstrations you observe, and activities in which you participate. Learn to motivate students without sacrificing academic standards yet increase student achievement, satisfaction, and success.

Literature Review
The irrefutable traditional teaching methods of the past are now refutable by the contemporary student population, (Zmuda, 2008.) Long lectures, strict discipline and authoritative attitudes no longer work. According to Robertson, Yun, and Murray, (2009) innovation is essential, methods other than traditional methods can improve the quality of teaching and learning in higher education, (Deignan, 2009, Gomleksiz, 2007, Pedro, 2005) and faculty are critical in student success (Levin, Cox, Cerven, Haberler, 2010.) Creating a culture of warmth and support builds trust in the learning community and not only influences student achievement, but can also contribute to improvement in attendance and tardiness and, in one case, the complete transformation of a failing school (Cianca and Lampe, 2010.)

Teachers who inspire care about their students enough to invest time in learning. They do more than facilitate an increase in knowledge in students ((Van der Zee and de Jong, 2009.) Contemporary students question and challenge course content, test questions, and the grades on their assignments. They demand clear expectations, specific guidelines, individualized attention, and personalized feedback. It takes work to connect with some students, and for those who feel disconnected, success is difficult. Teachers who inspire listen, get to know their students, connect with them (Glasser, 2000) and learn how to challenge and motivate them, (Zmuda, 2008.) When teachers are genuine, have high moral standards, and serve as remarkable role models, they instill in students a degree of social virtue (Van der Zee and de Jong, 2009.) Teachers who inspire get excited when their students succeed and care enough to search for innovative ways to make up for the deficiencies of traditional teaching methods, (Wang, 2010.) Teachers who inspire scrutinize scoring tools and recognize the need to provide the messiness of engagement and the time for discovery, (Zmuda, 2008.)

Teachers who inspire use a plethora of active learning, non-traditional teaching strategies that won’t sacrifice academic standards and will result in student achievement, success, and satisfaction, (Cianca and Lampe, 2010.)

Goals and Objectives for the Practice Session

As at result of this session, participants will be able to:
- Explain how contemporary students developed into the unique yet diverse, creative yet demanding, confident and worldly generation of students
- Identify teaching methods of the past that no longer work
- Specify the wants and needs of contemporary students that will result in student success, satisfaction, and retention
- Observe demonstrations of strategies that can be used immediately to build relationships, connect with students, and get them to look forward to coming to class and participating in activities
- See examples of course policies and grading rubrics and revise their own syllabus so that it has clear and specific policies concerning attendance, missing exams, submitting late assignments, and grading subjective essays, papers, and other projects and assignments.

Description of the practice to be modeled

Participants who attend this session will learn the developmental issues unique to this population, what these students want and need, and what motivates them. They will observe demonstrations of strategies that build relationships, connect with students, and get students to come to class.
Participants will be encouraged to actively participate in class activities that they will be able to use to motivate and engage their own students. They will also have an opportunity to take the Essential “Es” Assessment to evaluate their potential to be a Teacher Who Inspires.

Discussion

This presentation is based on The Essential “E” Strategy that was developed over 20+ years of dealing with a diverse population of traditional, non-traditional, classroom and online students. It entails EDUCATION about diversity, the use of clear and specific course EXPECTATIONS, the use of good quality assignment instructions and EVALUATION checklists, a strong sense of EMPATHY for these unique students, holding and living by high moral standards and ETHICS, and ENTICING students as a teaching method.

References