Scaffolding a Syllabus for Academic Success
Melissa Thomas, J.D., CSL Director
Pop Quiz

What non-intellectual traits do you think equal success (high GPA) in college?

1. Brainstorm five traits (think)

2. Share with a partner (pair)

3. Come back to the group to discuss (share)
## Non-Intelective Correlates of GPA Grouped by Distinct Research Domains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality traits</th>
<th>Motivation factors</th>
<th>Self-regulatory learning strategies</th>
<th>Students’ approach to learning</th>
<th>Psychosocial contextual influences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
<td>Locus of control</td>
<td>Test anxiety</td>
<td>Deep</td>
<td>Social integration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Procrastination</td>
<td>Pessimistic attributional style</td>
<td>Rehearsal</td>
<td>Surface</td>
<td>Academic integration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>Optimism</td>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>Institutional integration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neuroticism</td>
<td>Academic self-efficacy</td>
<td>Elaboration</td>
<td></td>
<td>Goal commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreeableness</td>
<td>Performance self-efficacy</td>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
<td></td>
<td>Social support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraversion</td>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
<td>Metacognition</td>
<td></td>
<td>Stress (in general)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Need for cognition</td>
<td>Academic intrinsic motivation</td>
<td>Effort regulation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Academic stress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional intelligence</td>
<td>Academic extrinsic motivation</td>
<td>Help seeking</td>
<td></td>
<td>Depression</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Learning goal orientation</td>
<td>Peer learning</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Performance goal orientation</td>
<td>Time/study management</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Performance avoidance goal orientation</td>
<td>Concentration</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Grade goal</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Agenda

- Importance of syllabus & you in student success
- Promoting learning through:
  - Self-regulation
  - Daily: Self-efficacy, goals, & support
  - Weekly: Synthesis & feedback
- Framing CSL in your course
Importance of the Syllabus

- Petrine, Lisle, & Tucker (1995): 104 college students
  - Support statement on syllabus or no statement
    - "Please come and talk to me."

- Who was willing to seek help?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Potential Problem</th>
<th>Supportive</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trouble understanding textbook</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low grade on first exam</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard to hear instructor’s lectures</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study skills ineffective for course</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking about dropping course</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trouble understanding major topic</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All significantly different!
Syllabus Tone

172 Students

- Friendly Syllabus
- Unfriendly Syllabus

Students thought they were evaluating an adjunct.
(Harnish & Bridges, 2011)
Examples from Syllabus

Unfriendly

• If you need to contact me outside of office hours, you may email me...

• Come prepared to actively participate in this course. This is the best way to engage you in learning...

Friendly

• I welcome you to contact me outside of class and student hours. You may email me...

• I hope you actively participate in this course. I say this because I found it is the best way to engage you in learning...

Directly quoted from Harnish and Bridges (2011)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Friendly Average</th>
<th>Unfriendly Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approachability</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>3.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Level of Motivation to Teach</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Let’s check for tone by looking at section 1: *Overall Perception of the Course.*

Christine Harrington (2013)
Syllabus Checklist
Promoting Learning
Through Self-Regulation
Self-regulatory behavior is at the heart of being successful in college (White & Kitchen, 1991).

Time management practices and the ability to combat procrastination are more predictive of first-year college achievement than SAT scores and high school grades combined (Hazard, 1997).

What are self-regulatory behaviors?
- Time Management Practices
- Ability to Self-Motivate
- Strategies to Combat Procrastination
- Effective Goal-Setting
Attribution Theory

Mueller and Dweck’s (1998) study:

- Moderate Difficulty Puzzle
- Feedback (Based on Group)
- Difficult Puzzle
- Moderate Difficulty Puzzle
Prediction Time

Who performed the BEST and who performed the WORST on the last puzzle?

- Experimental Group 1
  - **Ability:**
  - Wow you did really well, you must be SMART.

- Experimental Group 2
  - **Effort:**
  - Wow you did really well, you must have WORKED HARD.

- Control Group
  - **Control:**
  - Wow you did really well.
The Results...
Classroom Application

Help students attribute their mistakes to something that is INTERNAL and CHANGEABLE (like EFFORT)!
IDEAL Study Habits

Before Exams

Weekly

Daily
ACTUAL Study Habits

Daily

Weekly

Before Exams
Partner up and brainstorm:

1) Student roadblocks to effective time management. That is, what gets in the way for students?

2) And what can you do in your classroom to support students in touching material multiple times?
Promoting Self-efficacy, Goals, & Support

Daily Work
Supporting Students Daily

- Believe in students
- Build their self-efficacy
- Set challenging goals
- Provide support
- Provide discussion questions BEFORE short lecture
- Provide opportunity for daily summary
- Preview reading material for next class
- Show them how you read
- Take attendance
Teacher Expectations Impact Student Performance?

Rosenthal & Jacobson (1968)

Students were randomly assigned IQ scores (smart or not smart) and these scores were provided to teachers.
Students in the “smart” group performed significantly better than the students in the “not smart” group.
Academically Adrift by Arum & Roska (2011) – encourage faculty to foster self-efficacy by:

1. Communicating high expectations
2. Defining success
Fostering Critical Thinking

What is critical thinking?
1) Awareness of a set of interrelated critical questions
2) Ability to ask and answer critical questions at appropriate times
3) Desire to actively use the critical questions

Browne & Keely (2009)
Two Approaches to Thinking

Sponge

Panning for Gold
How are they reading?

**Sponge**
- Read carefully
- Remember as much as possible
- Underline/highlight
- Take notes summarizing main points/topics
- Mission is to fine and understand what author says
- Memorizes reasoning
- Doesn’t evaluate

**Panning for Gold**
- Reader asks self a number of questions designed to uncover the best available decisions/beliefs
- Questions author’s claims
- Makes notes to self in margins indicating problems with reasoning
- Forms own conclusion
1. Every group member (n = 4) writes down an idea about how you can **support your students’ DAILY academic success**.
2. Pass the index card to the right.
3. Write another: not the same as your prior idea and not an idea already listed on the card.
4. Continue passing the card until it reaches the originator.
5. Group Discussion about all the ideas generated.
Synthesis & Feedback

Weekly Work
Supporting Students

Weekly

- Quizzes to check for meaning
- Have students work in groups to review and annotate notes inside of units
- Summarize on a weekly basis— make “thinking public”
- Show students how to break down large readings
- Use your PF/Synthesis Seminar

Daily

Before Exams

Weekly

Daily
Retrieval Processes

180 college students

SSSS  SSST  STTT

S = Study; T = Test

Roediger & Karpicke (2006)
Classroom ideas:

Start each class with a short answer question.

Begin each class with students talking to a classmate about what they remember from prior class or reading.

Use weekly time to set the week’s agenda or summarize what has been covered.

Have students build study guide or test questions.

Give a quiz or test very early on—maybe even first week (but count for nothing or small points).

Roediger & Karpicke (2006)
Mindfulness & the Process of Learning

9th Grade Students

Read – You will be Tested

Learn the Material

Make the Material Meaningful to You

Lieberman & Langer (1995)
Mindful Learning Results

- Students who did not rely on memorization outperformed the others on every measure:
  - They recalled more information from both readings
  - The essays they wrote were judged to be more creative and intelligent
  - AND their scores improved from the first immediate test to the second delayed (long-term) test
Characteristics of Effective Feedback

- Wlodkowski (2008) suggests that feedback should be:
  - Connected to a “standard” (i.e. rubric)
  - Inform the student
  - Be specific and constructive
  - Prompt and frequent

- Additionally, we should provide many learning opportunities (Arum & Roksa, 2011)
- And varied opportunities to value different types of success (i.e., exams, projects, written communication, presentations, problem-based learning tasks)
Your Goals

Take a few minutes to reflect on one change you can make to your syllabus in each of the categories:

1) Syllabus tone

2) Model time management/ self-regulation

3) Reinforce daily learning

4) reinforce weekly learning

5) Provide better feedback
The Center for Student Learning can serve as a resource in many ways. But we always encourage you (the faculty member) to be the student’s first stop on their academic success path.

What we ask them is exactly what I’ve talked with you today about:

- How are you studying?
- How are you reading?
- How do you manage your time?
- How do you set goals?
Center for Student Learning: I encourage you to utilize the Center for Student Learning’s (CSL) academic support services for assistance in study strategies and course content. They offer tutoring, Supplemental Instruction, study skills appointments, and workshops. Students of all abilities have become more successful using these programs throughout their academic career and they are available to you at no additional cost. For more information regarding these services please visit the CSL website at http://csl.cofc.edu or call (843)953-5635.