

# Better Teaching Through Building Relationships

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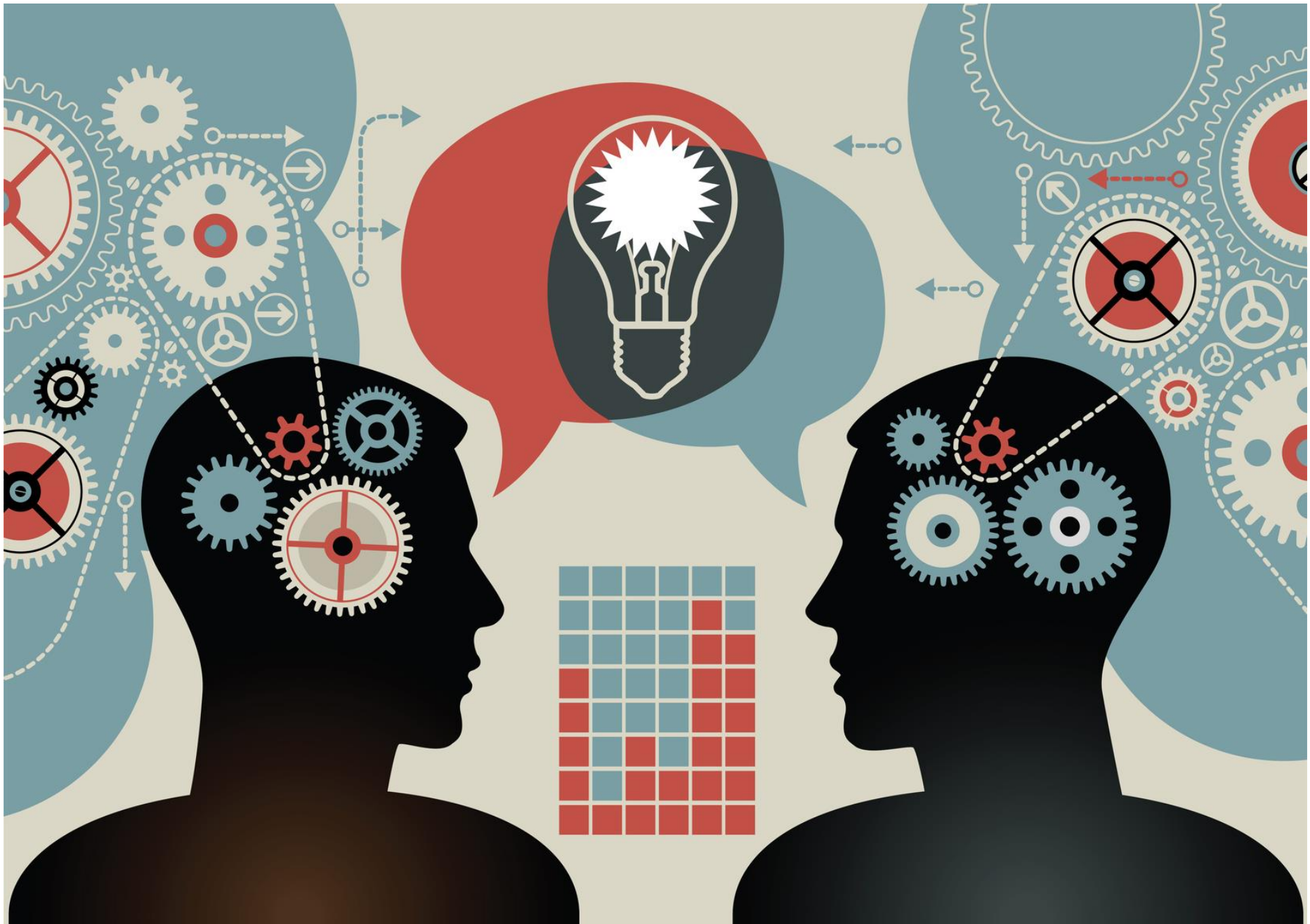
*Love of Teaching*

Montgomery College, 4/28/2017

What is Learning?









# The Importance of Social Interactions for Learning

# Social Interactions are Key to Learning

- Social engagement (e.g., immediacy) improves memory (Kelley & Gorham, 1988)
- The threat of social isolation impairs cognitive functioning (Baumeister, Twenge, & Nuss, 2002)

“I learn better when I am treated as a person rather than a number”

(Student quoted in Baxter Magolda, 1987)





# Interpersonal Interactions

- Intellectual interactions with faculty and peers are vital to college students' intellectual development and academic success (Lampport, 1993)
- The effects of college are “mediated through the interpersonal environments they create” (Terenzini, Pascarella, & Blimling, 1999)





- Faculty-student relationships have a substantial effect on learning
  - Meta-analyses find a large effect size [0.72] (Hattie, 2008, as cited in Wiley, 2013)

“[Faculty-student interactions] are critical for everything from building students' capacity as scholars, fostering degree aspirations and retention (especially in the sciences), and promoting the success of students from underrepresented backgrounds.”

(Baker & Griffin, 2010, p. 2)

- Students sharpen intellectual skills and deepen understanding through interactions with faculty and peers (Kember, Leung, & Ma, 2006; Smith, 1977; Whitt et al., 1999)

“The more students are involved, academically and socially, in shared learning experiences that link them as learners with their peers, the more likely they are to become more involved in their own learning and invest the time and energy needed to learn.”

(Tinto, 1997, p. 615)

“You know, the more I talk to other people about our class stuff, the homework, the tests, the more I'm actually learning, . . . and the more I learn not only about other people but also about the subject, because my brain is getting more, because I'm getting more involved with the students. I'm getting more involved with the class even after class.”

(student quoted in Tinto, 1997, p. 615)



Unless you  
you cannot  
Temne proved





# Fostering Trust and Creating a Supportive Environment

“[I would learn best with a] caring relationship [with my instructor] in which honest feedback and opportunities for growth are provided. With this type of relationship I would feel free to take risks to enhance my own growth. “

(student quoted in Baxter Magolda, 1987, p. 54)

- Both students and teachers highlight the importance of open, supportive, comfortable, safe, and respectful relations in class. (Anderson & Carta-Falsa, 2002)
- Feeling respected when interacting with faculty is a key factor in academic motivation and confidence (Komarraju, Musulkin, & Bhattacharya, 2010)
- Students participate more in class in a more supportive atmosphere (Nunn, 1996)

“Highly effective teachers tend to reflect a strong trust in students. They usually believe that students want to learn, and they assume, until proven otherwise, that they can. [. . .] Above all, they tend to treat students with what can only be called simple decency.”

(Bain, 2004, p. 18)

Positive Relationships Foster  
Better Teaching

$$\begin{aligned}\cos(2x) &= \cos^2(x) - \sin^2(x) = 2\cos^2(x) - 1 = 1 - 2\sin^2(x) \\ \tan(2x) &= 2\tan(x) / (1 - \tan^2(x)) \\ \sin^2(x) &= 1/2 - 1/2 \cos(2x) \\ \cos^2(x) &= 1/2 + 1/2 \cos(2x) \\ \sin x - \sin y &= 2 \sin((x-y)/2) \cos((x+y)/2) \\ \cos x - \cos y &= -2 \sin((x-y)/2) \sin((x+y)/2)\end{aligned}$$



- Positive engagement with students is likely to increase faculty satisfaction (Graham, West, & Schaller, 1992; Spilt, Koomen, & Thijs, 2011)
- Students report that faculty approachability, enthusiasm, and dedication are helpful to their success (Devlin & O'Shea, 2012)
- Faculty are seen as more approachable when they show concern for their students (Denzine & Pulos, 2000)





Good Relationships Strengthen  
Students' Motivation

- When professors show genuine concern for their students, their students are more motivated, have a more positive attitude toward the class, get better grades, and learn more. (Teven & McCroskey, 1997; Wilson, 2006, 2008; Wilson & Taylor, 2001)
- Students who feel alienated or distant from their professors tend to be discouraged and unmotivated. (Komarraju, Musulkin, & Bhattacharya, 2010)

“When you have a personal relationship, or personal interaction, it makes you want to give 100% and do your best -- you don't want to let this person down.”

(Student quoted in Cotton & Wilson, 2006, p. 500)

Good Relationships Increase  
Students' Sense of Belonging

#itooamharvard



- College students' sense of belonging increases academic motivation, commitment, persistence, and self-efficacy (Freeman, Anderman, & Jensen, 2007).
- Particularly critical for first-generation and ethnic minority students

Good Relationships Strengthen  
Students' Academic Self-Concept





- College students have a strong need for self-esteem and self-affirmation (Terenzini et al., 1994)
- Encouragement and positive feedback can foster increased self-confidence and enhanced academic self-concept.

- In short, positive academic relationships are vital to students' academic success.
- Plus, they make our teaching better and more enjoyable.

What are you already doing to  
foster positive academic  
relationships for your students?

What could you do to further  
strengthen your students'  
academic relationships?

# How to Strengthen Relationships

- Provide opportunities for your students to interact with faculty (like you!).
  - Simply posting office hours is not enough.
- Provide opportunities for your students to interact with other students academically (e.g., group work, small-group discussions).
- Be approachable, warm, and respectful
- Express enthusiasm

# How to Strengthen Relationships

- Be a mentor or informal advisor for your students
  - students assigned a faculty mentor have better academic performance and a lower dropout rate (Campbell & Campbell, 1997; Hu & Ma, 2010)

“How can I be an educator if I do not develop in myself a caring and loving attitude toward the student, which is indispensable on the part of one who is committed to teaching and to the education process itself. “

~ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom*

Questions?



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