TEACHING TIPS OF THE MONTH
FROM THE MC COMMUNITY

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Theme: The Syllabus

Tip 1: Syllabus Search/Quiz

Description: A syllabus search is a nice alternative to having the students just be passive listeners as you go through each part of the syllabus. With this activity, they become active readers in finding specific key information, and, in the process, develop greater familiarity with the syllabus.

Show your questions targeting important syllabus information on the screen. Typical questions include:

- Where is your professor's office?
- What are her/his office hours?
- I will be able to make up an exam: True or False?
- What percentage of the final grade are lab reports?
- What is the professor's policy on turning in work late?
- I have to respond to EVERY (Blackboard) Discussion question: True or False?
- What is the date and time for the final exam?

You may want to emphasize a few points before having your students begin: (a) It's okay if they do not find all the answers, if this is not counted as a quiz; (2) They should take advantage of reading "guideposts" such as headings and bolded/italicized words to find the answers more quickly. When "time is up", call on different students for each answer. As you review each answer, discuss other related important information in the syllabus.

Variations: Turn this into a pair or group activity in which responsibility for finding all of the answers is divided among each member. After time is up for finding the answers, each member shares their answers with the rest of the group.

Syllabus Quiz: Have your students answer the questions at home as a quiz. This can be done on Blackboard or simply in pen and paper format. One option is to count the score as a small part of the class participation grade (as motivation to complete!).

For more information on this activity, contact Ray Gonzales (ray.gonzales@montgomerycollege.edu) or Alla Webb (alla.webb@montgomerycollege.edu).

Tip 2: Add Interactive Elements to the Syllabus

Description: Your syllabus is a living, dynamic document. To help students navigate this resource, you can integrate simple elements such as a table of contents to help them find specific information quickly or a pie chart to give a visual reference for how assignments are weighted.

Create a table of contents by inserting a text box or shape and adding the topics and corresponding page numbers. Create headings within the syllabus to correspond to the topics in your table of contents. See this history syllabus example.

Create a pie chart in Word to give students a visual representation of how much each assignment counts. If color printing is a challenge, use textures to distinguish pieces of the pie, or use one color and choose a chart option that separates the pie pieces.

For more information about this tip, contact Angela Lanier (angela.lanier@montgomerycollege.edu)

"Teaching Tips of the Month" began as a project of Program for Active Learning in STEM (PALS) and Teaching to Increase Diversity and Equity in STEM (TIDES) grants. Many thanks to Ray Gonzales and Alla Webb, who served as Principle Investigators of the TIDES/PALS grants. You can view archived Teaching Tips of the Month on The Hub. We welcome feedback and invite you to submit ideas for this publication to Angela Lanier (angela.lanier@montgomerycollege.edu).