



# STUDENT ENGAGEMENT TIPS OF THE MONTH



Brought to you by TIDES and PALS Summer II 2015

The Faculty Program for Active Learning in STEM (GTSTEP/PALS) ([www.montgomerycollege.edu/gtstep](http://www.montgomerycollege.edu/gtstep)), the Teaching to Increase Diversity and Equity in STEM (TIDES - <http://cms.montgomerycollege.edu/TIDES/>) grant project, and ELITE (<http://cms.montgomerycollege.edu/elite/>) are happy to bring you the "Student Engagement Tips of the Month". Both PALS (with its focus on active learning in STEM) and TIDES (with its focus on active learning and culturally sensitive pedagogy) seek to incorporate highly engaging learning activities for diverse student populations into STEM courses. However, as you will see, many of these activities are not STEM-specific and can be applied to any course. We also welcome your general feedback about this publication, which you can send to [tides@montgomerycollege.edu](mailto:tides@montgomerycollege.edu).

## First Class Meeting Tips

### Tip 1: Motivating Group Work

**Goals:** (1) To set the tone for the course by implementing group activities immediately; (2) To foster a sense of community within the classroom



**Description:** Have students work on a problem or create a list individually. After a sufficient amount of time, have students work in small groups (3-5 students) on the same problem or list. Discuss solution or answers with the class. At the conclusion of the activity, ask students whether they prefer working individually or in groups and why.

**Example:** In a general chemistry class, the instructor writes on the board the chemical names of common materials, and asks students to work individually to determine what everyday materials correspond with these chemical names (i.e. sodium chloride = table salt; sodium bicarbonate = baking soda; acetic acid = white vinegar, etc.) After a few minutes, students are instructed to work in groups to share their knowledge and come up with a more complete list. When asked whether they prefer working in groups or individually, students choose group work since they have experienced the power of multiple minds working together on a task.

*Motivating Group Work continued*

**Total Time:** 5-10 minutes each for individual attempt, group collaboration, and follow-up discussion.

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### Tip 2: Syllabus Reading

**Goals:** (1) To set the tone for the course by implementing group activities immediately; (2) To have students read and comprehend the course syllabus; (3) To foster a sense of community within the classroom



**Description:** Divide up the course syllabus into sections. Assign groups of students to different sections. Student groups read and discuss their section of the syllabus. Finally, each group presents its section to the rest of the class.

**Total Time:** 30 minutes; 15 minutes for group work, 15 minutes for presentations to the class.

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