The Faculty Program for Active Learning in STEM (GTSTEP/PALS) (**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 "Teaching 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**.

Theme: Gamification

Tip 1: Integrate Narrative

Goal: To engage students in course material and organize course material in a cohesive way

Description: They say everyone loves a good story! So why not transform your course using elements of a narrative? Think of your course as a journey where students progress through a series **quests** or **challenges.** See this example of a **chemistry professor who uses narrative** to define the mission of the course. As students conquer each challenge, introduce new conflicts or plot twists where they apply what they learn to advance to more complex tasks or complete a mission.

Variation: If developing an ongoing narrative is too daunting, consider "including a paragraph with each assignment that tells a little story. [Such as] 'You are a spy trying to break into a government building in enemy territory. Solve these 30 math problems to gain entrance through the secret gate in the back'" (see **Keeler, 2015, Gamification: Engaging Students with Narrative**).

Tip 2: Implement Rewards

Goal: To acknowledge achievement and encourage persistence

Description: Rewards are a motivational tool. To maximize motivation, it is critical to choose rewards that students care about and that are attainable yet require meaningful work.

Variations of rewards:

- **Badges** can be awarded for specific achievements (ex. earning 80% on a test, completing research paper prerequisites). Badges can be tangible (like stickers) or virtual. You can set up virtual badges in Blackboard. See this **video** or **online tutorial** for how to do it.
- **Course Success** rewards have an impact on students' grades. For example, if students reach a certain milestone they can drop a low quiz grade, retake a test, use notes for a test, etc.
- **Consumable** rewards such as snacks or candy work well for short, in-class activities.

Contact **Angela Lanier**, ELITE Instructional Designer, for more on gamification.