Teaching UNLV Students: Evidence on What Works

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Underrepresented, first-generation and low-income students comprise the new majority of incoming college students in the United States. They are currently half as likely to graduate from college as their white and Asian peers -- a devastating statistic. UNLV proudly claims the second most diverse student population among U.S. colleges and universities. This session offers evidence-based strategies you can use to combat the inequities in student success in the U.S., by identifying teaching/learning practices that demonstrably promote UNLV students’ success.

SUPPORT / RESOURCES FOR YOUR TEACHING AT UNLV

Best Practices Examples
- View examples of UNLV teachers at work here, and submit your own: http://www.unlv.edu/provost/idr/best-practices

Consultation by appointment
- Meet one of our staff or Teaching Academy Fellows to talk over your teaching: http://www.unlv.edu/provost/idr/people

Directory of Resources
- http://www.unlv.edu/provost/idr/services-resources

Events
- Attend upcoming teaching-support workshops: http://www.unlv.edu/provost/idr/events
- View videorecordings and materials from past events: http://www.unlv.edu/provost/idr/events-archive
EXAMPLES: Less Transparent

1. Select a profession in your prospective academic discipline
   and career field that is considered an expert in an area in which
   you are interested.

2. Score an interview with the professional for a date and time
   that is convenient for both of you.

3. Prepare 8-10 questions to ask the professional about their
   knowledge of a particular academic discipline or career field.

4. Conduct a 20-minute face-to-face interview to gather
   knowledge about the interviewer's well-known decision.

5. Prepare a 15-second essay that addresses selected questions
   and answers using the information gained from the
   interview.

6. Write a 400-500 word reflection paper in which you address the
   interview with the interviewer's permission.

7. Submit the reflection paper to your instructor.
   - What questions are you still having?
   - What have you learned from them that is most interesting?
   - Why did you select and why?

Following items:

- 3. What this assignment helped you learn about your
- 2. What you learned from them that is most interesting?
- 1. Who selected and why?
Criteria for Success: Please see the attached rubric.

Exercises:

Chapter 10: Scientific Evidence

Sample D

Figure: Interviewer's Name, October 15, 2014

Used by permission of Katharine Johnson.

EXAMPlE: More Transparent

Cri

teria for success:

Please see the attached rubric.

1. Synthesize evidence presented in essays and provide a rationale for your viewpoint.
2. Coherent and complete the information provided by participants in the field of study.
3. Conduct a study: Before starting your research, you should clearly define the scope and objectives of your research.
4. Original contribution: The contribution of your research should include new ideas or perspectives.
5. Literature review: The research should be based on a thorough review of existing literature.
6. Methodology: The research should be systematic and transparent.
7. Data analysis: The analysis of data should be objective and consistent.
8. Discussion: The discussion should be comprehensive and relevant to the research question.

Sample E

EXAMPlE: More Transparent

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Sample F

EXAMPlE: More Transparent

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Sample G

EXAMPlE: More Transparent

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Sample H

EXAMPlE: More Transparent

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Sample I

EXAMPlE: More Transparent

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Sample J

EXAMPlE: More Transparent

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The Unwritten Rules: Decode Your Assignments and Decipher What's Expected of You

Breaking News

The Transparency in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education Project at UNLV demonstrated in a national study that transparency around academic assignments enhances students’ success -- especially that of first-generation, low-income and underrepresented college students -- at statistically significant levels (with a medium-to-large sized magnitude of effect for underserved students). When faculty make the purpose, tasks and criteria of an academic assignment clear before students begin to work on it, students are more likely to experience greater academic success with that assignment, developing the knowledge, disposition, and skills necessary to succeed both at school and in life (in comparison to when faculty do not make these things clear for students). For UNLV students, benefits also included a significantly higher rate of returning to college the following year. (Winkelmes et al., Peer Review 2016; Gianoutsos and Winkelmes, PADE Proceedings 2016).

Background

An inclusive learning environment benefits all students and offers more equitable learning opportunities for underserved students. Research on student learning links college students’ academic confidence and sense of belonging with higher GPAs, persistence and retention rates (Walton and Cohen 2011). In addition, college students increased their test scores when supported by a system that advocated the belief that intelligence is not fixed but rather malleable. A year later, these students were 80% less likely to drop out of college (Aronson et al 2002).

WHAT STUDENTS CAN DO:

Before you begin working on an assignment or class activity, ask the instructor to help you understand the following. (Bring this document to help frame the conversation.)

Purpose

• Skills you’ll practice by doing this assignment
• Content knowledge you’ll gain from doing this assignment
• How you can use these in your life beyond the context of this course, in and beyond college

Task

• What to do
• How to do it (Are there recommended steps? What roadblocks/mistakes should you avoid?)

Criteria

• Checklist (Are you on the right track? How to know you’re doing what’s expected?)
• Annotated examples of successful work
  (What’s good about these examples? Use the checklist to identify the successful parts.)

# DRAFT Checklist for Designing a Transparent Assignment

## PURPOSE:

### Skills
- Does your purpose statement specify content knowledge that students will gain from doing this assignment?
- Does your purpose statement link that particular knowledge to the larger context of:
  - recent topics of class sessions?
  - this part of the course?
  - the whole course?
  - the major?
  - the discipline?
  - your institution’s main learning outcomes?
- Does your purpose statement indicate the relevance and/or usefulness of this knowledge to the students’ lives:
  - beyond the course? beyond the major? beyond college?

### Knowledge
- Does your purpose statement specify a skill or skill set that students will practice while doing the assignment?
- Does your purpose statement link that particular skill/skill set to examples/contexts where this skill was important in the context of:
  - recent class sessions?
  - this part of the course?
  - the whole course?
  - the major?
  - the discipline?
  - your institution’s main learning outcomes?
- Does your statement indicate the relevance and/or usefulness of this knowledge to the students’ lives:
  - beyond the course? beyond the major? beyond college?

Would this assignment benefit from segmenting it into several assignments, each one focused on a discrete set of skills that should be mastered to insure students’ successful completion of the next assignment in the sequence?

## TASK:

- Does your description of the task:
  - Identify the very first thing students should do when they begin working on the assignment?
  - The very next thing they should do?
  - The next, etc.
  - Does your description of the task help students to avoid wasting their time on unnecessary steps, unproductive time expenditure?
  - Does your description help students to focus their time efficiently on producing the highest quality work possible in the time given?
  - Would students benefit from some practice exercises (in the form of a pre-task) in class to prepare them to perform the task outside of class on the graded assignment?

## CRITERIA:

- Can students use the criteria while they are working on the assignment to determine whether they are completing the assignment efficiently and effectively?
- Do the criteria take the form of a checklist students can use to evaluate the quality of their efforts while they are working on the assignment?
- Does the checklist specify characteristics of high quality work for this assignment?
- Can you help students apply the checklist to evaluating some sample work in class, so they understand how each criterion would look in practice?
- With your guidance, can the students collaboratively annotate several examples of work to indicate where/how the work satisfies the criteria? (These annotated examples may then be shared as a reference for students to use while they work on their own assignments.)
- Would a rubric (AAC&U VALUE examples) be helpful to students for this assignment?
- Does the rubric provide an amount of information that helps students at this phase in their learning?
- Does the rubric provide an overwhelming or counterproductive amount of information for students at this phase in their learning?
- Did you provide examples of good work, annotated to identify exactly where and how this work satisfies your criteria?
- Can you provide students with examples in class so they and you can test out your criteria checklist or rubric to be sure students know how to apply the criteria to multiple examples of work, and eventually their own work?