

Tips for Increasing Student Attendance

Faculty compete with many life distractions that may result in decreased student attendance in their courses. While it may not be possible to prevent all students from missing class, there are strategies that can help lessen the problem. Look through the tips below to see what strategies will work for you and your course.

Establish Clear Expectations Regarding Attendance on the First Day of Class

- Set the tone for the semester on the first day of class by explicitly stating that attendance is important and why.
- Emphasize the importance of attendance in your syllabus.
- Inform students of the consequences of not attending class.

Articulate the Benefits of Attending and the Costs of Not Attending Class

- Let students know what they will gain from attending class (e.g. material covered in class not available in other ways; practice in applying concepts; active involvement with course content; participation in collaborative activities; points for participation, discussion, or attendance).
- Let students know what they will lose by not attending class (e.g. valuable information necessary to do well in the course; opportunities to learn from peers; chances to find out how well they understand material; practice for exams; points towards grades).

Make Class Time Necessary

- Use meeting time to do things not easily accomplished in another way.
- Incorporate active instructional methods into class meetings.
- Foster peer interdependence. Consider devoting a part of class to working in groups. Award each group member a number of points when the group has submitted a response to a problem or activity. Have each student sign the response.
- Make class participation points a substantial part of the final grade.

Cultivate Student Ownership of the Course

- Give students choices regarding assignments or timetables for completion of assignments or topics to cover.
- Obtain and use student feedback to shape your course by finding out what is and is not working while there is still time to make changes.

Encourage Frequent Faculty-Student Contact

- Keep in mind that frequent faculty-student contact in and out of class is an important factor in student motivation and retention.
- Make an effort to learn students' names. Try to get to know their interests and backgrounds and give them opportunities to learn yours.
- Provide incentives for students to visit during office hours, communicate with you via email, and/or participate in online discussion forums.

Let Absent Students Know They Are Missed

- Send an email message to those students whose attendance is lagging. Show your concern and ask them to get in touch.

- Set up phone or email buddies during the first day of class so students can get in touch with each other to find out what they missed.
- Post course materials online or hand out a detailed activity plan to provide students who have to miss class the feeling that they can keep up. Provide alternatives for students with legitimate reasons for missing class to make up work.

References

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