Teaching Tips: Relationship to Students

Relating to students with enthusiasm, passion, and dedication to the subject will spur the students' desire to learn and explore. The more of these attributes you share, the more motivated students become and respond in a way that enhances their learning. Instructors who are available and approachable help create a safe learning environment for students who may not otherwise ask for clarification or help. In addition, when faculty engages with students outside the classroom, it can nurture interactions and enrich the student experience. When faculty are congenial, it humanizes them to their students, breaks down barriers and encourage students to comply with teacher requests that result in greater learning outcomes.

1. **Enthusiastic, Passionate and Dedicated**
   - Discover a personal strategy or approach you can employ to get "psyched up" and enthusiastic for a lecture. Teaching is a performance art.
   - Think of your classroom as a theater and your role as an actor. Before class, don’t simply review your lecture notes (script); define the feelings that you attach to your ideas. When you start class (raise the curtain), you will thereby set an atmosphere and focus the audience’s attention. Begin by saying something along the lines of “I find today’s topic interesting (fascinating, exciting) because…” During the hour, use not only your voice but also your body. Make eye contact. Use gestures to underline your ideas. Move to different sides of the stage and walk up the aisles.
   - Share your energy and intensity. It will move your audience-and help you and the students reach your objectives.
   - Be enthusiastic about your subject. An instructor’s enthusiasm is a crucial factor in student motivation. If you seem bored or apathetic, students will lose interest and momentum. Think back to what attracted you to the field and bring those aspects of the subject to life for your students. If portions of the material seem dull to you, challenge yourself to devise the most exciting way to present that material.
   - Communicate that you value what you are teaching to everyone, particularly your students who will become more interested and excited about what they are learning.
   - Be dynamic. Teacher enthusiasm has a significant influence on student engagement in the classroom. The more enthusiastic and dynamic teachers are, the more engaged students became, behaviorally, cognitively, and emotionally.
   - Convey your passion and enthusiasm for the subject and your willingness to provide individual help. Your body language and voice must convey the message that there is nowhere else you’d rather be. Many professors like to walk among the students, be physically active and animated, and have their whole body and voice reflect their great fascination with the subject matter. Classes can be much more engaging when teachers are moving around and not sitting still or lecturing from a lectern. When students see and feel their professor’s passion, they want to participate.

2. **Available and Approachable**
○ Ask the class for feedback on what worked well and for opportunities for improvement after significant presentations (case lead, case takeaway, slide presentations, etc.),

○ Go beyond simply announcing office hours and, instead, circulate appointment sheets twice inviting students to “come by for twenty minutes so we can get to know each other.”

○ Create opportunities to develop mutual respect. As the teacher gets closer to students there is an opportunity to develop mutual respect and pull student knowledge and experience into discussions.

○ Come to the classroom a few minutes before the lecture and stay a few minutes later so that students can ask you questions.

○ Plan ways to make yourself more approachable, including your use of office hours. Students in large classes don’t always feel comfortable coming to office hours. The distance that is created between the podium and the rows of seats makes them feel intimidated by the thought of meeting individually with the professor. Encourage students to attend office hours and partake of the extra learning. You can always schedule an informal meeting time: a brown-bag lunch in the conference room one day a week at a specific time. Even if only a small percentage of the entire class attends, the fact you made yourself available to eat with students will make everyone in the class feel that you are more accessible and approachable.

3. Congenial

○ Use humor and use your own style. Use humor to create a relaxed atmosphere. "If students feel relaxed and confident, they will perform better."

○ Include humor and “extemporaneous” inserts in your lectures.

○ Experiment and fail from time to time. Students can benefit from seeing this.

○ Make a lasting impression with humor and wit. It reduces stress and frustration, and gives people a chance to look at their circumstances from another point of view.

○ Share cartoons that make relevant points with humor.

SOURCES:


Watson, Janet (2016) In class observations Senior Faculty Advisor Berkeley Haas.