

University Students' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

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Abstract : Teacher quality is important for United States universities. It impacts student achievement, program and degree progress, and even retention. While course instructors are still the primary designers and deliverers of instruction in U.S. higher education classrooms, students have become better and more vocal consumers of instruction. They are capable of identifying what instructors do that facilitates their learning or, conversely, what instructors do that makes learning more difficult. Instructors can use students as resources as they design and implement their courses. Students have become more aware of their own learning preferences and processes and can articulate those. While it is not necessarily possible or likely that an instructor can address the widely varying differences in learning preferences represented by a large class of students, it is possible for them to employ general instructional supports that help students understand clearly the instructor's study expectations, identify critical content, efficiently commit content to memory, and develop new skills. Those learning supports include reading guides, test study guides, and other instructor-developed tasks that organize learning for students, hold them accountable for the content, and prepare them to use that material in simulated and real situations. When U.S. university teaching and learning support staff work with instructors to help them identify areas of their teaching to improve, a key part of that assistance includes talking to the instructor member's students. Students are asked to explain what the instructor does that helps them learn, what the instructor does that impedes their learning, and what they wish the instructor would do. Not surprisingly, students are very specific in what they see as helpful learning supports for them. Moreover, they also identify impediments to their success, viewing those as the instructor creating unnecessary barriers to learning. A qualitative survey was developed to provide undergraduate students the opportunity to identify instructor behaviors and/or practices that they thought helped students learn and those behaviors and practices that were perceived as hindrances to student success. That information is used to help instructors implement more student-focused learning supports that facilitate student achievement. In this session, data shared from the survey will focus on supportive instructor behaviors identified by undergraduate students in an institution located in the southwest United States and those behaviors that students perceive as creating unnecessary barriers to their academic success.

Keywords : effective teaching, pedagogy, student engagement, instructional design

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