

Lessons Learned on a Reverse Field Trip: A Field Study of Prospective Students

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Abstract : Knowing your audience is important regardless of what profession you are in. Whether this audience is comprised of customers or students, having an idea of who these people are, where they come from, and some of the challenges they may have faced allows us to build better relationships with them. This paper will recap a field study experience that has been dubbed a "reverse field trip" to a local high school. Here, going back in time produced not only a great deal of nostalgia, but also served as a reminder of who prospective university students are before they arrive. This information is invaluable as it can help inform classroom (and other) strategies that may help them succeed, and persist through the college years, which will no doubt present them with undeniable changes and challenges. Interviews with school staff and observations of student behavior, both inside and outside the classroom, yielded several lessons learned (i.e., issues to address). These include considerations of regimen, three separate yet related levels of context, and expectation-setting. Each issue will be presented in detail, along with pedagogical strategies to help address them. These strategies have both student-level and institutional benefits as they have the potential not only to increase student engagement, but also improve retention rates.

Keywords : pedagogy, Student engagement, student retention, teaching strategy

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