

Tech Snacks: Faculty Round Table on Student Engagement in the Classroom

This semester (Fall 2024), faculty from across campus have expressed similar feelings and noticed similar trends regarding student engagement in their classrooms. In order to get a better picture of the overall trends, faculty participated in a “round table” discussion, talking through their experiences and gathering ideas from their colleagues.

OTLE asked three questions in each session:

1. What are you noticing regarding student engagement in your classrooms?
2. What have you done to address any issues in your classrooms?
3. What ideas do you have for the future?

This handout will gather notes from all three discussions, highlighting common trends and experiences with ideas for addressing any concerns in the future.

Trend 1: Lack of Engagement & Participation

The most common observation from faculty was the overwhelming lack of engagement and participation from students in their face-to-face classes. Faculty from each college expressed similar experiences, including:

- Low participation from students who do attend class
- Low mental health
- Cell phone/technology dependency
- Lack of maturity (using/writing profanity in class, lack of professionalism)
- Lack of interaction with peers in class (usually due to cell phone usage)

Trend 2: Low Attendance & Lack of Motivation

Another common trend noticed by faculty is the decrease in attendance and the lack of motivation to complete work in their face-to-face classes. Some examples include:

- Low attendance, specifically in morning classes
- Students showing up later than usual to class or leaving in the middle of class
- Students asking “Why do I have to do this for my degree?”

Trend 3: Low Mental Health

Faculty are noticing a decline in student mental health, and an increase in students who are open about their declining mental health. This trend has directly and negatively impacted student performance in many classes.

- Students suffering from anxiety about missed class often miss more class in avoidance
- Students suffering from depression often miss classes and fall behind
- Students seem to suffer from embarrassment over missing class, causing them to continue missing class

What have faculty done to address these issues in the classroom?

- Increasing weight of attendance/participation grades
- Adding in-class assignments that can't be made up outside of class
- Incorporating more group projects/assignments
- Asking students for feedback throughout the semester, and including some of their recommendations when possible
- Having students "teach" a lesson to the class
- Purposefully adding relationship-building opportunities
- Direct students to on-campus and off-campus resources that can help them both academically and mentally

What ideas can we use in the future?

- Incorporate more student choice into assessments when possible
- Help students learn their own learning style
- Have conversations with students in class about their own engagement
- Incorporate more in-class graded activities
- Add a professionalism grade to the final grade total
- Incorporate more policies/guidelines into the syllabus
- Encourage students to determine their "why" for attending school (money, degree, etc.,)
- Explain the purpose of activities. This generation of students tends to value their time significantly, which can cause frustration if they don't understand why they are doing something
- Bring in alumni from your degree program to discuss about life after college