

Starting the semester strong and ideas for success as well as overcoming challenges.

- Rachel Clark shared an innovative way to format her syllabus, which was attached to the email. This is a great example of “practicing what we preach” in being more creative communicators. She asked her class their preference for type of syllabus and the infographic was selected 100%.
- A new class location was secured to allow for more interaction. We also discussed rearranging a room if possible to stimulate interaction.
- We discussed various ice breakers to use at the beginning of a semester, which serve multiple purposes – getting the students used to communicating in class, help everyone get acquainted and some types assess prior learning.
- Several instructors use a first-day discussion to assess what students know about nutrition or a specific area of nutrition. This helps students reinforce what they know, helps new students, informs instructors of gaps in knowledge, helps the instructors to intersperse ways prior knowledge relates to the current class, and more.
- We discussed the importance of building community at the beginning of the semester. The idea was given for a getting to know you activity in which students answer questions, share with a partner and partners introduce one another to the class.
- Peer mentoring is a successful approach. One instructor has a structured assignment pairing Freshmen with Seniors and they meet approximately three times a semester with specific guidelines for discussion and reflection. Assignments include career goals, mock interviews, etc.
- RD mentoring is also utilized to help students with career planning.
- The importance of hands-on, real-life activities and projects was discussed at length. Many different approaches are used. Some courses have one location or audience that is used for multiple project components and assignments.
- One idea for a culminating activity was a campus-wide health fair for National Nutrition Month in which the general ed nutrition course students get credit for attending, local RDNs help evaluate, and the media is invited.
- Many ideas for collaborations between various departments to simulate interprofessional work.
- Importance of having students do some type of communicating every class period.
- We discussed the challenge of long class periods, such as 3 hours and agreed that making the class interactive, activity based, flipped concept rather than lecture style.
- Importance of clear expectations while leaving plenty of room for creativity is a challenge.
- Discussed various ways to organize a class and pros and cons of each.
- Working with outside organizations to complete projects can be challenging yet is essential for real world experiences.

- Establish clear expectations. In addition to putting in writing in your syllabus and discussing in class, consider having the students complete an assignment, possibly even calling it a course contract, to demonstrate they understand key expectations.
- Emphasize why the course is important. How does it fit in with previous and future courses and their careers?
- Look for opportunities to talk about the course in earlier classes so that students arrive with positive and accurate expectations.
- Consider asking former students to come talk to the current students about what they got out of the class and suggestions for success. If not in person, in writing or recorded on video.
- Assess student knowledge at the onset, which could include learning retention from previous courses as well as pretesting course content.
- Get to know the students and what they hope to get out of the course. What do they look forward to? What do they fear? What questions do they have?
- Ask them what their expectations are – of you, of the course...
- Have students do goal setting and follow up periodically with reflections on their progress.
- Learn student names. Do ice breakers to get acquainted.
- Melinda Johnson shared an effective activity she used in her course at the start of the semester related to cultural humility:
<https://starbucksglobalacademy.com/explore/?type=To%20Be%20Welcoming>
- Others shared how effective it was to not only share your expectations but to also have the students share their expectations and goals.
- Using tiny assignments and creating a safe environment for students to playfully get acquainted and begin speaking in class
- Use of applause to encourage students to speak in class

Ideas for planning ahead for Fall semester –

- integrate guest speakers and field trips,
- don't try to cover the entire book,
- give plenty of opportunities to speak and write,
- include community-based projects and presentations,
- provide an activity to go over the expectations in the syllabus,
- start a class with an ice breaker, such as: If you were a spice, what spice represents you?
- When students hesitate to speak up, have each student call on the next person.

- In a course for non-majors about nutrition, try having the students each pick a vitamin and do a sales presentation about it.
- Use TED talks and reputable videos for presenting information.