TEACHING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS- PROMISING PRACTICES

Many of our students speak English as an additional language and are learning the language alongside disciplinary knowledge. They come to our campus with high hopes and expectations, a desire to succeed; and yet, they often struggle in our classes. How can you as the instructor best support them so that they can thrive and achieve their academic goals? This tip sheet provides ideas and teaching practices that can help your international students develop a sense of belonging in your classes and succeed academically. And, these practices will support the learning of ALL your students!

Connecting with Your Students

▪ Get to know your students: Ask your students what they are used to in terms of learning, studying, interacting in class, etc. so that you know their strengths and areas where they will need support and scaffolding.
▪ Learn names with appropriate pronunciation.
▪ Require an office hour visit. Explain the purpose of office hours.

Communication & Accessibility

▪ Communicate explicitly your expectations:
  a. Communicate explicitly expected classroom behaviors: Many international students are not accustomed to speaking up in class, asking questions, or challenging others’ viewpoints and ideas in class.
  b. Teach your students explicitly about the genres, expectations, and purposes for writing in your academic discipline.
▪ Include hyperlinks with campus resources in your syllabus. Encourage students to get support from the Writing Center, Learning Resource Center, and the ESL Program.
▪ Be mindful of your own speech: Use short sentences. Pause at regular intervals to give students time to process what you said. Avoid jargon. Explain acronyms and cultural references.
▪ Redundancy. Repeat or rephrase instructions. Have instructions on a worksheet or a PowerPoint slide.
▪ Use the black/whiteboard to organize the class discussion, to highlight important insights, and to show relationships between ideas and concepts.
▪ Use visual supports to represent ideas and concepts: sketches, google images, concept maps, real objects, videos (with subtitles), animated videos (with subtitles).
▪ Use graphic organizers and lecture outlines to help students organize content.
▪ Provide a list of important concepts with definitions.
▪ Stress/highlight key information & concepts.
▪ Availability of course content: Make classroom materials, including your PowerPoint presentations, available before, live and/or after class. Before class, make available a PowerPoint presentation with just the outline of your lecture and encourage students to fill in the blank spaces during the lecture.
▪ Designated Note Taker: On a rotating basis, ask students in your class to be the note taker (maybe for extra-credit), and have them share their notes on Moodle with the whole class.
▪ Quickly and regularly gauge students’ understandings of course content and skills by using Classroom Assessment Techniques, such as a Minute Paper, iClicker Questions, Exit Ticket or Muddiest Point.
▪ If you don’t understand something students say, ask them to spell it out for you.
Building Connections
- Provide opportunities that ask students to connect abstract conceptualization to concrete experiences, experimentation, and reflection.
- Provide examples in the course content from contexts outside of the United States.
- Provide opportunities for students to relate course content to their own experiences and contexts. How does what they learn in class relates to similar issues in their home countries?
- Allow students to work with a chosen partner(s) when appropriate, and at other times connect international students with U.S. native students during partner or small group work.

Encourage Participation
- Offer wait time. Students need time to think and reflect. Allow for 10 seconds of silence after your opening question and another 10 seconds after the first response to your initial question.
- Offer various ways for participating beyond speaking up in class (online discussion, note-taking...).
- Mix-it up: Vary between individual, pair, small group, and whole class activities.
- Writing before speaking: Use pre-discussion writing strategies - such as quick writes, shared writing, or completing a sentence starter to help students organize their thinking and make them feel prepared before entering into a discussion.
- Provide guiding questions for students’ reading and engagement with other course texts.
- Teach students to ask questions.
- Provide opportunities for collaborative work so that students can discuss, communicate, listen to, read with, negotiate, and problem solve with students of all types.
- Assign rotating roles in group projects.

Scaffolding Assignments
- Design transparent assignments that map out the purpose for the assignment, necessary knowledge and skills, the steps involved in the task, and the criteria you will use to evaluate their performance.
- Provide examples of completed assignments and papers.
- Use an assessment rubric that allows your students to identify the traits and criteria for a well-developed piece of writing or project.
- Provide regular and timely feedback
  - Be concise and focus on major points and patterns (representative strengths and weaknesses).
  - Correct for content on first draft; for mechanics and grammar (if you do) on later drafts.
  - Balance the content of your feedback. Use the “sandwich approach”. Begin by providing comments on specific strengths, give reinforcement and identify things the student should keep doing. Praise students for improvement. Then identify specific areas for improvement and ways to make changes. Conclude with a positive comment and/or ask questions that will guide further student inquiry.
- Drafts & revisions: Allow students to revise assignments based on your or their peers’ feedback.
- Have someone from the Writing Center come to your class to teach students about the most important aspects of the genre of writing required in your course, what citation format to use and how to use it, what plagiarism is and how to avoid it.
- Provide students with appropriate resources for citation: invite a librarian, teach it, link to resources.