The CLA Advising News

Student Affairs and Advising Center (SAAC)
College of Liberal Arts
310 Kirby Plaza; 726-8180; clasad.umn.edu

Strategies for Prevention and Reduction of Classroom Incivility

In an article published in College Teaching, Sorcinelli (1994) and Amanda (1993) state that incivility in college classrooms is on the rise (as cited in Feldmann, 2001). “Classroom incivility restricts the learning and teaching capability of our institutions” (Feldmann, 2001, para. 1). In a related 2003 article, Steven A. Meyers identifies strategies to prevent and reduce conflict in the classroom. Prevention of classroom conflict, according to Meyers (2003), is the best means of controlling inappropriate classroom behavior.

Strategies for Preventing Classroom Conflict:
1. By communicating warmth and interpersonal sensitivity, classroom conflict may be prevented. Kearney and Plax (1992), state that effective instructors display emotional and physical immediacy, which is defined as engaging students through eye contact, open body posture, respectful listening, smiling, and expressions of interest (as cited in Meyers 2003). These actions increase the students’ affinity toward the instructor and subject matter.
2. Students and instructors working together to establish a shared set of goals and a common course agenda. Involvement in this process can improve students’ reaction to the class and their motivation to learn. By including the students’ input, the instructor demonstrates care and responsiveness (see classroom activity on back page).
3. By establishing learning communities in the classroom, instructors build a sense of community within the classroom which can create classroom cohesion and decrease the potential for conflict.

Strategies for Reducing Negative Emotion and Classroom Conflict:
1. Demonstrating empathy for students by restating their concerns (using the process of reflection) to fully acknowledge their feelings.
2. Helping students identify alternatives and evaluate the outcome of each solution may reduce conflict in the classroom.
3. Using comprehensive problem-solving methods. This strategy includes the identification and evaluation of acceptable alternatives, but also includes private discussions with the student(s) to fully address the conflict and determine mutually acceptable solutions. This strategy is most effective when the conflict is detected early and the instructor initiates a dialog with the student(s).

References:
ANNOUNCEMENT

Mary Keenan, CLA’s Director of New Student Programs and Advising will begin a new role on January 20 as UMD’s Coordinator of Student Success Initiatives. In that role, Mary will move out of CLA SAAC and over to Darland to work out of the VCAA’s Office. CLA’s loss is UMD’s gain. Please contact Mary and wish her well in her new role.

Writing Reference Letters for Students

Have you been asked to write a reference letter for a student? According to Julie Westlund, Director of UMD Career Services, faculty members are frequently considered an excellent student resource for referrals to graduate and professional school programs as well as for internships and jobs. The University of Minnesota has established requirements related to providing references aligned with FERPA guidelines to protect both the student and letter writer. Visit this link to access guidelines, sample letters, and consent forms:

http://www.d.umn.edu/umdhr/Policies/references/memo.htm

Strategies for Prevention and Reduction of Classroom Incivility (con’t)

An Activity for the 1st Day of Class

1. Have students recall positive educational experiences.
2. On white board or flip chart write the qualities students associate with a positive educational experience.
3. Instructor may add some qualities that may be missing from the list.
4. Next, have students identify and write the qualities of a good student.
5. Reflect and discuss the shared qualities.
6. Students and instructors agree to abide by the lists.


Spring 2009 Tuition Refund Schedule

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<th>Date</th>
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