

Ensure Students Are Learning: Faculty Descriptions of Innovative Teaching Practices

“Critter of the Day” Brings Course Content to Life

Innovative Teaching Practice Description:

The instructor spends the first five minutes of class introducing students to the “critter of the day,” an organism related to that day’s lesson content. For example, when discussing parasitism, the instructor might show a picture of a trout with whirling disease (a disease caused by an invasive parasite). The “critters” are presented either on a PowerPoint slide or, if the instructor has living or preserved specimens of the organism, in person. The instructor has a large database of “critters” to share and tries to introduce students to local organisms with which they may be unfamiliar. The instructor spends time weekly searching for pictures to add to the collection so there are plenty from which to choose. Personal pictures relevant to the content (e.g., the instructor holding a bullfrog), graphic photos, or those that catch students’ eyes are helpful for stimulating conversation.