

Ensure Students Are Learning: Faculty Descriptions of Innovative Teaching Practices

Mid-Term Checks Help Students Measure Progress and Understand Grades

Innovative Teaching Practice Description:

At the midpoint of the semester, the instructor engages students in a mid-term check process that helps them determine their academic standing in the class and develop a strategy for progressing through the end of the semester. The overarching goal is to reinforce that grades are earned, not awarded, and to help students learn how to keep track of their own progress and to develop a sense of ownership for their learning.

The first step in the process is to help students understand the point system used for grading by walking them through the process of documenting all their assignments and the corresponding number of points they earned for each assignment. The instructor asks students to divide a sheet of paper in half by drawing a line down the middle. Students list all the course assignments on the left side of the page, with the total possible points for each assignment indicated next to it. Students use the right side of the page to tally the points they earned for each assignment (students can access their grades online or by looking at the graded assignments that were handed back). After totaling their points at the bottom of the right side, students refer to the grading scale listed in the syllabus to determine their current letter grade in the course thus far.

The instructor meets with each student one-on-one during class as soon as they finish calculating their scores and corresponding letter grade. Because time is limited, these one-on-one sessions last one or two minutes. For students who are not doing as well as expected, the instructor schedules an additional one-on-one meeting outside of class to discuss strategies and resources for improvement. Some of the strategies may include spending more time reading or better managing time to complete assignments more adequately. The instructor may also refer students to specific resources such as tutoring or counseling, depending on each student's situation.

Notes From the Instructor About This Innovative Teaching Practice:

“Taking a few minutes to meet with each student during class time encourages students to complete the activity. Furthermore, seeing classmates go through the process seems to motivate students to measure their own progress.”