

Sarah Anderegg

From: Jonathan Eldridge
Sent: Wednesday, October 26, 2022 10:55 AM
To: Jonathan Eldridge
Subject: Fall 2022 Faculty Information & Updates, Volume XIII
Attachments: Advice From Students and Grading Participation.pdf

Dear College of Marin Faculty:

As a reminder, the period for students to complete their survey for the faculty evaluation process ends on Monday, October 31st. Late-start courses will have the survey open on November 28th. *Please encourage your students to complete the survey before the end of the day this Monday, 10/31.* Students have received emails with the survey link/instructions.

Also this week, I have attached a two-in-one piece that touches on seeking advice from former students and on grading participation in your courses. Some good food for thought.

If I can be of assistance in any way, please do reach out.

Thank you.

Jonathan



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Advice From Students Who've Taken Your Course Before & More Ideas on Grading Participation

As Yvonne Sun was describing a long-term group project to students in her upper-level infectious-diseases course this fall, she had an idea.

Sun, an associate professor of biology at the University of Dayton, in Ohio, sent a quick message on GroupMe to students who'd taken the course the last two times she'd taught it. She explained that current class members were embarking on their projects. "Any tips and wisdom you'd like to share?" she asked.

The project asks students to create a global travel itinerary as a way of learning about diseases. It's meant to let them be creative, connect with one another, and have some fun.

A couple of Sun's former students responded right away. Get started early, one graduate suggested, and then you'll have more time for your other courses during the end-of-the-semester crunch.

Sun set up the GroupMe in the fall of 2020. She was teaching on Zoom, and wanted another way that everyone could communicate if the conferencing platform went down. GroupMe proved to be a good avenue for the students to connect, and at the end of the semester Sun converted their conversation to an alumni group, where the students — mostly pre-health professionals — would sometimes share relevant news articles.

When she taught the course in 2021, it was back in person, and Sun didn't rely on the app in the same way. But she offered to let students join the alumni group afterward, and some did.

Among them was Marissa Layman, a 2021 biology graduate who responded to Sun's question by writing: "Try to find a topic you really enjoy and are passionate about!" Layman's group had had fun with the project, she said, designing it around dos and don'ts for staying healthy while traveling the world.

Seeking advice about a course from former students is smart, Layman said, "because we were the ones taking it, and not the teacher." And GroupMe is a good channel for

this kind of communication, she added, because messages don't get lost in a crowded inbox.

Sun shared the former students' advice during class. As students packed up to leave, she heard some of them discussing what the alumni had said. They seemed encouraged, she noticed. "I could see a lot of smiles."

Have you given your former students an opportunity to support current ones, either ad hoc or in a more sustained way?

How Your Students Participate

- David S. Weiss, a part-time instructor of English at Georgia Gwinnett College, gives his students credit for what he calls "engagement," rather than "participation," he wrote. It comes to 20 percent of their final grade. "An engagement grade will be posted for each class," Weiss states on his syllabus. "It will consider your attendance of and participation in class, your communication (by email and on D2L) with the instructor and fellow students as requested, your timely completion of assignments, and your consideration of feedback previously provided. If you do all these things, you will receive full credit ... for that class." Three other possible grades are listed: Present/Participated; Distracted; Failure to Participate/Distracting Others. Weiss invites students to challenge their engagement grade, he said in an email. "It is my view that if a student actively challenges an engagement grade in writing, they are both fulfilling the purpose of my class (remember, it's a writing class, English Comp II) and are demonstrating engagement. I have had very few students take advantage of my invitation to challenge grades, and on the whole their objections are valid (in which case, I gladly change the grade)."
- Linda McCarthy, a professor of sociology at Greenfield Community College, in Massachusetts, offers her students options. "I used to give examples to students about all the ways that they could participate, along with a rubric," she wrote. "But last semester I moved to giving students the opportunity to set their own learning goals for participation. Why would we expect all students to participate in the same ways? We don't, in meetings and such!" In her current system, McCarthy's students are asked to pick three goals from a provided list — with the option of adding their own. Students assess their own progress on the goals at the middle and end of the semester, and, at the end, they grade themselves. Students liked the approach, she reported. "One student wondered why every professor isn't doing this. They said it kept them

cognizant of their role in the class. I hoped it let them know that everyone has an impact on the class, and that can look differently.”

- Stephanie Laggini Fiore, assistant vice provost of the Center for the Advancement of Teaching at Temple University, in Philadelphia, works with her students to create a rubric for participating in class. “I put them in pairs to discuss, and the pairs added ideas to a Jamboard. Then we went over the answers and discussed it together. I made sure to add some things as well. The students came up with some great things about quality of contribution, building on the comments of others, actively listening, etc.,” she wrote. “Then I created a simple rubric from what we had all discussed in class. Its heading was ‘Students Who Show Exemplary Participation in Class,’ with the items listed that we discussed.” Midway through the course, Fiore said, she had students assess their own participation, and compared it to her own observations. “It worked great,” she said, “in having students take ownership of their work in class and also define what participation could mean.”

Beckie Supiano writes about teaching, learning, and the human interactions that shape them.