The Inclusive Academic:
Strategies for Maintaining Balance in a Changing Academic World

18th Annual Teaching Matters Conference – Abstracts by Session

Friday March 13, 2020

Poster Session – 9:00 – 10:00am

Instructional Complex (IC) 112

Maximizing Student Learning Through Interactive Techniques in any Teaching Environment
Mrs. Katy Basch, Kennesaw State University

This poster session will share strategies for maintaining student interest and engagement in all learning environments (Face to Face, Online, Hybrid) in higher education. The recommended classroom activities are gleaned from seventeen years of teaching in higher education, along with purposeful participation in a variety of professional development opportunities. The discipline that the teaching methods were specifically adapted for was Literacy Instruction in Early Childhood Education, however, they would effectively integrate into the instruction of other disciplines. The methods will be a combination of low and high tech solutions for transferring ownership of learning to the students. Specific examples of teaching activities to use for increased student engagement include using a variety of digital tools as well as adult-learner friendly games. The outcome of these examples of engaging instructional practices can include increased retention of material, increased student participation, and overall satisfaction for the instructor and students. The content shared with participants will be based on research-based teaching practices that suggest the human need for engagement as directed by the Universal Design for Learning. It also requires the instructor to plan activities carefully to elicit the final learning outcome of a Backwards Design model. This poster topic relates to the singular theme of the Teaching Matters conference, “Managing Engaging Classrooms”. It is relevant to all higher education instructors because most reflective practitioners benefit from exposure to ideas to improve their practice. Increasing student engagement and making learning more meaningful will have positive results in sharing content and invigorating one’s teaching practice.

The Effective Use of PowerPoint Presentations in Education
Dr. Gary Fisk, Georgia Southwestern State University

PowerPoint presentations are a standard teaching practice, but evidence-based recommendations for effective teaching with this technology are somewhat thin. A comprehensive review of pedagogical studies on PowerPoint in education was performed. An important finding is that PowerPoint has not been shown to reliably raise student educational outcomes compared to chalkboards, which raises doubts about prevailing presentation practices. Evidence-based methods for improving PowerPoint presentations includes assertion-evidence formatted slides and questioning to promote critical thinking. The conference theme of work-life balance will be addressed by proposing that PowerPoint files can serve as a collection point for educational content and activities. PowerPoint files can be an electronic resource that slowly improves over time, thereby decreasing a professor’s workload for developing new instructional material from scratch every semester.
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Practicing What You Preach: Using Health Psychology’s Biopsychosocial Approach to Maintain a Healthier Work Lifestyle
Dr. Judy Orton Grissett, Georgia Southwestern State University

Historically, perspectives about health and well-being have come from a predominantly biological, or biomedical model, which focuses on individuals’ health status as the presence or absence of illness (Hooker & Pressman, 2020). This model has influenced not only the medical field’s view of health but also how people view their health in their everyday lives. In more recent years, health psychologists have argued for a more holistic, integrative approach to well-being—the biopsychosocial model. According to this approach, health and well-being are a culmination of the interrelationships between the biological, psychological, and social factors in people’s lives. Each set of factors is inextricably related, meaning that a change in one area can lead to changes in another area (and often multiple other areas). For example, when someone experiences the pressure of an upcoming deadline (a psychological factor), they may experience migraines (a biological factor), which may lead to missed work (a social factor). The missed work can in turn lead to more stress and therefore additional biological, psychological, and social consequences. In short, in order to maintain a healthy lifestyle, we must take care of all dimensions of ourselves, not just the physical.

As a psychology professor, I ask my undergraduate students in a health psychology course to apply the biopsychosocial model to their own lives by setting a health-related goal (e.g., more sleep, healthier eating habits) and developing specific steps to reach this goal throughout the semester. As I ask students to record their progress and apply the course concepts to their own behaviors, I often find myself simultaneously making my own poor health decisions (e.g., sitting in front of a computer for too long or staying up too late grading assignments). In order to promote my personal well-being, I have striven toward incorporating the lessons I teach to students about the biopsychosocial model into my own life.

The goal of this presentation twofold. The first is to explain and promote the biopsychosocial model as a framework to build healthy habits. The second is to offer concrete suggestions to improve each dimension of well-being (biological, psychological, and social). Suggestions will include specific time-management strategies (e.g., prioritization), setting SMART goals, and incorporating small changes into your daily routine, such as taking short walks around the office and intentional breaks from email. This poster presentation will be beneficial for all attendees but specific examples will be geared toward those who work in academia. Handouts and worksheets on the biopsychosocial framework, specific strategies, and resources will also be available.

Technology Use on a Rural College Campus
Dr. Janet Koposko, Ms. McKenzie Lewis, Mr. Jared Roach, Ms. Sarah Bryant, Ms. Keylee Johnson, Ms. Tamia Pena, Ms. Laura Starnes, Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College

This year’s conference theme focuses on maintaining balance in a changing academic world. One way that both students and faculty can strive for balance is by utilizing technology to save time, make work more effective, and stay on the cutting edge of teaching and learning. However, not all groups have equal access to knowledge about campus technology. In this investigation, we sought to determine whether or not college students who went to high school in a rural (as opposed to urban) area were at a disadvantage in using technology resources to succeed in college. Ninety students completed a survey about their awareness of and use of various technology at the college. Independent samples t-tests were used to compare rural and urban students on four dependent variables: how often they used technology resources on campus, how comfortable they were using the technology resources, how advanced the technology was at their high school, and how well their high school prepared them to use the technology in college. For each t-test, the average rating for rural students was lower than the average rating for urban students; however, the difference was not statistically significant. As part of the investigation, students read a list of twenty-five technology resources on campus and indicated whether or not they were aware of each one. The results imply that inequalities in access to technology between rural and urban areas may be lessening, and that all students could benefit from more information about the technology resources on campus that are under-utilized.
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Use of Full Body Stretch Yoga Poses in Anatomy & Physiology I Lab Activities
Ms. Anna Willingham, Dr. Cathy Lee, Dr. Anne Sanders, Gordon State College

Anatomy Physiology I Lab Activities involve the contents of skeletal, joints, muscular and nervous systems. In order for students to engage in this content in a new way and link the interactions among these organ systems, full body stretch yoga poses were introduced for students to make connections between above organ systems. Students presented their posters containing the given yoga poses with these organ system involvements. Students also completed a survey after the posters were completed.

Implications of Academic Mergers on Colleges and Universities
Mr. Jared Roach and Dr. Janet Koposko, Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College

As the number of academic mergers has increased across Georgia in recent years, there is growing concern that the results of such mergers could have profound impacts on the conditions of employment at the consolidated institutions. It is therefore necessary to understand both the short-term and long-term impacts of such mergers and evaluate how these changes could ultimately affect the stability of newly merged colleges. For this project, we conducted a literature review that identifies and evaluates academic mergers and their effects. Some of the studies included in this review focus on a merger of two colleges in Georgia with differing academic and organizational cultures that examined how the merger affected the structural function and institutional culture of the colleges and their faculty members. Key impacts were changes in faculty members’ attachment with the college, increases in faculty stress levels, and higher rates of turnover intention among the faculty. Other themes included how mergers are often used by institutions to stave off the effects of financial and economic stressors and how a college’s organizational functionality is impacted by a merger. The findings presented in these studies highlight specific problems that face academic institutions after merging. This research presents administrators and other interested parties with valuable information that examines potential issues which could arise during the course of a merger. Future research should be focused on identifying more complex issues that could arise after the merger has taken place with regard to the institution’s organizational culture, psychological impacts on faculty, staff, and students, and the long-term structural impacts of mergers on the operation of the college.

Does Emphasizing Learning Objectives Improve Student Performance?
Dr. Richard Schmude, Gordon State College

Starting in the fall of 2018, the writer implemented new learning objectives in his Astronomy and Integrated Science Classes. These were emphasized on the day before exams and served as study guides. Exams covered the learning objectives. Mean EXAM scores in two classes (Integrated Science 2002 and ASTR 1020) were examined covering 2016-2019. There were 3.4 and 2.2 % improvements in mean Exam scores starting in the fall of 2018 for the ISCI 2002 and ASTR 1020 classes, respectively. This is probably the results of the learning objectives being emphasized as study material. The improvement in the ISCI 2002 class was statistically significant but no in the ASTR 1020 class. The mean percentage of DWF WF grades dropped from 20.7 % for 2012-2017 to 19.4 % for fall 2018 and later. Therefore, emphasizing learning objectives improves student performance especially for second-year students. This research was carried out to address objective 2.3 in the Gordon State College Strategic Plan.
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Professional Behavior and Dispositions
Dr. Thelma Sexton, Georgia Southwestern State University

Reflecting and Recharging. At GSW in the College of Education, we were giving all of our education students the knowledge to be successful teachers. But, we weren’t really making them successful employees. With the assistance of the Professional Behaviors and Dispositions Instrument, we could now grow our students from intro education courses to successful employees when they graduated. This instrument can be adjusted to work with other disciplines as well.

Balancing Mental Health, Family, and Work Life: Journeys Through Darkness and the Avenues I’ve Found for Peace and Joy Inside and Outside the College Classroom
Dr. Carmen Walker, Bowie State University

As professors, we are expected to enter the classroom, credentialed and ready to facilitate learning for our students. As professors, we are expected to engage in the ongoing task of service, research and writing. This is the beautiful wheel that we collectively turn! However, as individuals, our own wheels may get stuck, sometimes briefly and sometimes indefinitely, in the mud of mental health matters, like anxiety and depression. It is important to recognize how such matters impact professional life. This presentation provides a reflection on the experiences of one professor dealing with mental health matters, the importance of connection, and the ongoing strategies incorporated to be effective inside and outside the classroom.

The Cutting Edge: Creating Websites for Multimedia Projects
Mr. John Wilson, Georgia Southwestern State University

While the traditional research paper is still essential, giving this assignment multiple times a semester can be boring for the students, exhausting for the teacher to evaluate and not necessarily beneficial to students beyond the classroom. Consider staying on the cutting edge of scholarship and learning by incorporating a multimedia single or group presentation into your course in place of a research paper. Students will have to present the combined use of several different content forms, which can include text, images, video, audio, etc... on a topic of the instructor's choosing. Their website will have to be cohesive, involving a thesis, providing evidence and analyzing ideas. It will require strict attention to structure and style as well. Students will learn how to use free Web tools and build free websites. Just how important is this? Go online to CNN, Fox News, Yahoo News, etc...what do you see with almost each article? Yes, you see multimedia storytelling, complete with a combination of text, video, graphs, etc... Teach your students vital skills they will need beyond the classroom.

This is a very useful and fun project that I have taught in my Fundamentals of Information Literacy Class for the past two years at Georgia Southwestern State University. Students will learn how to create a website, use various free web tools, learn online copyright information, and proper citation of various media forms, including videos, Tweets, Facebook posts, etc...

In addition to this, many employers are actively seeking out employees who have experience managing web content and building websites. By adding a multimedia single or group presentation to your syllabi, your students will learn highly sought out skills they can add to their resumes.