

Faculty Intention to Student Retention Large and Introductory Class Sessions

Offering Choices Without Creating a Grading Nightmare



“Creating choices for students will generate interest in what they are doing and how they will perform in the class.”

-Dr. Steffi Jesseau, UNO Faculty

Helpful Guidance

- Choice theory suggests that students are driven by five genetically determined needs. One that can be fulfilled in the classroom is the need for freedom and autonomy. The power to choose what they are learning may encourage students to take ownership and buy into the material.
- Choices are a natural fit for general education courses because many students will not end up in a given field and don't need to retain everything there is to know about the discipline.
- Learned helplessness can result when students try and fail with a topic or class, and they come to believe they are incapable of success. Providing choices can help students overcome learned helplessness.

Ideas to Create Choices

- Create assignments with varying difficulty. Students who want to challenge themselves can do so, but students who are not as familiar with the content will be less intimidated.
- Let students choose their mode of delivery, such as a formal paper, presentation to a community group, video submission, podcast, informational pamphlet, portfolio, demonstration, performance, etc.
- Give students the option to work in groups or individually. In groups, assign roles and have students periodically switch roles so no one student feels responsible for all the work and everyone contributes (i.e. one person takes notes while the other generates ideas and then switch).
- With assignments or exams, only require students to complete a subset of assignments or questions, allowing students to focus on those that they find most interesting.

How to Avoid a Grading Nightmare

- Find or create a universal rubric (such as a VALUE rubric, see references below) to allow comparisons across different submission types.
- For some assignments:
 - give extra credit for those who want to challenge themselves with more difficult content. Not all students will turn in work.
 - post the answer key and have students grade themselves and have the Canvas grade reflect completeness.

References

Bae, S., & Kokka, K. *Student Engagement in Assessments: What Students and Teachers Find Engaging*. Stanford, CA. Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education and Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity. 2016

Brooks, C. F., and S. L. Young. “Are Choice-Making Opportunities Needed in the Classroom? Using Self-determination Theory to Consider Student Motivation and Learner Empowerment.” *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*. 23 (1): 48–59. 2011.

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