SWELL
Student Workshops for Excellence in Learning and Life

WORKSHOP# 2: Being an Active & Engaged College Student
SELF-ASSESSMENT—ENGAGEMENT WITH LEARNING

1. ___ I am usually comfortable asking a question in class.
2. ___ Whether the class has 15 or 150 students, I would ask about something I do not understand.
3. ___ I plan to participate in a study group to help me improve my grades.
4. ___ I plan to sit as close to the front as possible in every class so I can focus on the topic, the instructor, and the board.
5. ___ I believe that most college teachers are eager to discuss my progress; I will make an appointment if I am having difficulty.
6. ___ I have no problem understanding my instructors.
7. ___ I feel comfortable in class participation in a lecture class, where only the teacher is talking.
8. ___ I believe that if I can find a good mentor, that person can help me with many phases of my life.
9. ___ It’s okay with me if college teachers digress from their lesson plans if worthwhile discussions arise in class.
10. ___ If I disagree with the teacher, I should raise my hand and politely tell him or her why I disagree.
BASIC RULES FOR ACTIVE CLASSROOM LEARNING

Before class:

• Do your homework!
• Review your notes from the previous lecture and reading for the day
• Communicate immediately with professors about any study problems
• Focus on the task at hand before class
• Write any objectives that come to mind at the head of your notepaper:
  – preparing for an up-coming test,
  – understanding a particular concept,
  – gaining a good foundation on a topic
  – understanding or reviewing the readings
MORE BASIC RULES FOR ACTIVE CLASSROOM LEARNING

In Class:

• Position yourself in the classroom - consider the best location for:
  – listening
  – asking questions
  – seeing visual materials
  – discussing--not only with the teacher but also your classmates
  – Avoiding distractions

• Evaluate as you listen:
  – Decide what is important and should and shouldn’t be placed in your notes
  – Listen long enough to be sure you understand what was said before writing
  – Ask clarifying questions

• Write a "to do" list when the class finishes, including:
  – assignments
  – reviewing difficult concepts
  – joining study groups
  – making appointments with a study pal, tutor, or the instructor
EFFECTIVE LISTENING

Listening is a cognitive act that requires you to pay attention and think about and mentally process what you hear.

- Be Cognitively Ready to Listen
- Be Emotionally Ready to Listen
- Listen with a Purpose
- Listen with an Open Mind
- Be Attentive
- Be an Active Listener
- Accept Challenge
- Triumph Over the Environment
Paying Attention in the Classroom

- Anticipate the main ideas of the lecture
- Have questions
- Resist distractions
- Shift position in your seat every so often.
  - Shifting on occasion will keep the blood circulating, send more oxygen to your brain, and help you remain alert.
- When appropriate: ask a question, ask for more clarity, or engage an instructor and the class in dialogue
- Train yourself not to give in to distractions
CLASSE R OOM NOTE TAKING

• Get a good notebook:
  – Begin each session's notes with a cover page for later summaries and test preparation.

• A typical notes page includes:
  – Heading :
    • Date
    • Class/subject or title or number
    • Chapter’s and Topics Covered
    • Guest speakers’ names
  – Body:
    • Identify main points
    • Capture the main ideas

• Reduce notes after class:
  – Summarize
  – highlight key words
  – write down questions
  – link information from the text

• Review notes after class:
  – Reflect
  – Recite
  – Re-write
Write it Down if the Professor...

- Repeats an item
- Write an item on the board or overhead
- Points or gestures
- Changes tone or volume of voice
- Makes a direct reference to the book
- Asks if everyone understands
- Gives an example
- Slows down
Tips for Lecture Note Taking

• Don’t crowd your notes! Leave blanks to fill in missed items and to expand your notes later.
• Ask for help filling in the gaps if you think you missed one or more important points.
• Stay involved in the class and ask questions.
• Take too many notes.
• “Why is this important?”
• Focus on what the professor says rather than copying the notes.
• Use your own words.
• Underline, highlight or add symbols
• Add examples
CREATE YOUR OWN ABBREVIATIONS & SYMBOLS

Think of a class that you are in this semester that you know will have a lot of writing involved…..Now, think of the key terms that you know will be relevant throughout the semester….AND ABBREVIATE OR SYMBOLIZE THEM!

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<th>Key Word</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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REMEMBER THE KEY IS THAT YOU REMEMBER THESE ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS, SO USE YOUR FIRST INSTINCTS!
MAKING YOUR VOICE HEARD

• In class, listen carefully to what a professor or other students are saying
• Mark or make notes of the points you wish to answer or discuss or question
• "As I understand it...."
• It is very likely that if you have questions or information, others will share them
• Try to keep your comments to the point and don't hesitate to refer to your notes. Logic is not a speed test...
• Generally use your own examples to show your agreement with their point of view.
  – This demonstrates independent thinking which should be valued in an academic setting.
• After you have spoken, it is appropriate to ask for feedback if:
  – others understand what you have said
  – if others agree/disagree with you
  – Demonstrate openness and dialogue: you should score points with your professor!
What is it going to take for you to SPEAK UP in class?

Here are some great reasons to ask questions and voice your opinions…

• You can earn a better participation grade!
• Your teacher will learn who you are!
• You receive the opportunity to have your thoughts/ideas evaluated!
• You receive constructive feedback!
• You received ANSWERS!
• You set the tone for MORE QUESTIONS to be asked by your classmates!
TALKING TO YOUR PROFESSORS

• Smile.
• Introduce yourself by name.
• Refer to the specific class.
• If you are unsure about what to say ask a follow up question to the lecture.
• Glance around the office to see if you can find a common interest you may share with your professor.
• If you are there for help, say so! Be honest.
  – Tell your professor that you are having difficulty with the material
  – Inform them of how you’ve already tried to help yourself
  – They may also be able to recommend a good tutor
• When you leave thank the professor for their time and tell them you look forward to chatting with them again in the near future.
Good Reasons to Meet with Your Professors…

Before you have a problem…

• It is the start of the semester and you want to stop in to introduce yourself
• You are wondering how to study most effectively for the class.
• You are curious about the professor’s area of research interests and what articles or projects she might be working on right now.
• You have a question about a course policy that you want to clarify early in the term.
If you have a problem...

• You did poorly on a test or assignment and don’t understand why you received the grade that you received.
• You notice a mathematical or other error in your grade.
• You did poorly on a test or a paper and you would like to know how you could do better on the next such assignment.
  – You might even ask if the professor could share an example of an “A” paper with you.
• You need to miss a class or reschedule an exam or assignment
• You want to know if the professor could recommend a tutor
If you are interested in learning more…

- You’re thinking about majoring in the course’s department and would like more information.
- You’re thinking about a career, graduate school, an internship, a summer job, or a research opportunity in the field and want to talk to someone about those possibilities.

If you know of something that might interest the professor…

- You found an article, magazine story, or newspaper clipping that connects to the class or the professor’s research interests and you wanted to bring him/her a copy of it.
- You just saw a movie or tv show, read a book or found a website that connected to the course themes and you’re wondering if your professor is familiar with it.
Critical thinking studies a subject or problem with open-mindedness. The process begins with a statement of what is to be studied, proceeds to unrestricted discovery and consideration of possibilities, and concludes with a pattern for understanding that is based on evidence. Motives, bias, and prejudice of both the learner as well as the experts are then compared and form the foundation of judgment.

- Enter with an open mind: Define your destination, what you want to learn
  - Clarify or verify with your teacher or an "expert" your subject
- Topics can be simple phrases
- Think about what you already know about the subject
- What resources are available to you, and what is your timeline?
- Gather information
- Ask questions
- Organize what you have collected into patterns to understand it and look for connections
- Ask more questions
How do you demonstrate your learning of a topic?

List, label, identify → Demonstrate Knowledge
Define, explain, summarize in your own words → Comprehend/Understand
Solve, apply to a new situation → Use your learning; apply it
Compare and contrast, differentiate between items → Analyze
Create, combine, invent → Synthesize
Assess, recommend, value → Evaluate and explain why

Practicing Critical Thinking

- Question while you read
- OBJECT/DISAGREE
- Take the opposing point of view
- Write it Out
- Elaborate
- Test propositions
- Use self-regulation
KNOW YOUR RESOURCES

• Meet with professors and TAs
• Meet with your FYE Peer Mentor
• Schedule an Appointment with your academic advisor
• Talk to your classmates
• Talk to your RA
• Find out if the Department has tutoring services
• Go Online (to the Study Skills Enrichment Program website at http://www.wiu.edu/users/ccss/study_skills/study_skills.html)
• Participate in more SWELL workshops!
• Attend the Counseling Center’s Study Skills Series
How will you get more active & engaged this semester?
HINT: Think back to your initial self-assessment!

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Completion of Workshop!

Congratulations! You have completed the second workshop - “Being an Active and Engaged College Student”

Print out your certificate and sign and date it. Bring the certificate to your meeting with your advisor so you can discuss the strategies covered in the workshop.