Student Survey Question

Have you taken an online class?

If so, how would you evaluate your learning experience in it?
If you haven’t taken one, why not?

Student reluctance to take online courses is in some part probably mirrored by faculty who are reluctant to teach in that format: they like the immediate feedback and personal interaction of the traditional classroom.

That’s a lesson for faculty who teach online because it emphasizes 1) the need for learning opportunities that serve a variety of learning styles and 2) communication, communication, communication. There are so many ways that information can get lost in translation that it becomes imperative for the instructor to be very explicit about guidelines, directions, course expectations and assignment objectives. Since the give and take of a classroom context is lost, students look for the online courses to be engaging in innovative ways.

It’s also a lesson for faculty who teach in the traditional classroom setting: that the students value the time in the classroom with us more than we might think.

Students find the strength of online classes in the flexibility they offer for their schedules, which is worth considering if you are building in synchronous time such as mandated online hours.

Faculty who would like more information on online teaching can go to the CTE site to find the SUNY Plattsburgh Best Practices in Online Teaching document. Faculty can also expect to see a bound copy of these recommendations in January of next year.

In their words

“I haven’t taken one because I would rather have a personal experience with a teacher.”
— Whitney Wilson

“It was all right. I’d prefer a classroom because it is so much easier to ask questions.”
— Kristofer Fiore

continued on back
“Yes, I have. It was more time consuming and harder because it was all reading and it’s harder for me to retain information that way.”
—Alex Fitzgerald

Notes from the SCTE Chair, Kevin Stump (A&S, ‘10)
Online learning can serve as a great tool for all majors, but it should be more than simply archiving readings and submitting assignments.

Online learning should include social media, research techniques, and how to interpret information we find. Because students are already online more hours of the day than they are in class, in order to teach in the 21st century, instructors must integrate the learning experience and use technologies appropriately to help us better critically think about everything we are exposed to.

Teaching Suggestion from the SCTE
“Don’t put material on ANGEL that we don’t use in class – it just clutters the site and gives us a sense of overload in the work.”
Students on Teaching with ANGEL

What gets rave reviews:
• Instructors whose online content parallels class or forum discussions.
• Instructors who use the online site as an opportunity for formative learning – not just assessments for a grade.

What doesn’t:
• Misjudging the time involved in taking an online course and overloading it with work.
• In fully online classes, instructors who don’t respond to inquiries relatively quickly; we can’t just ask a question in class!

Students on Learning
If you want to be successful in online classes, do this:
• Participate in online forums and activities.
• Contact your instructor for clarification of learning objectives.

Don’t do this:
• Don’t expect it to be easier; it is actually more difficult.
• Don’t plagiarize! Don’t just copy and paste online material onto your online assignments!

The October Teacher of the Month
Margarita Garica-Notario, Ph.D., Adjunct lecturer, Foreign Languages

Excerpts from nominating submissions:
• “She focuses her classroom on her students. She is willing to work with students who need extra help and is always available. I don’t know how she does it. She has become my hero ever since my second year here. I am working on my teaching degree and want to model her in the classroom.” —Rossibel Taveras
• “Margarita is an incredibly motivated Spanish teacher. She is one of those teachers who base their teaching on what students need. She always asks us what she can do to make the class better.” —Judaisy Martinez
• “She goes out of her way to be available for her students...She continues to amaze me with her kindness and patience.” —Cody Carpenter

Margarita represents all those faculty (including the dedicated adjuncts) who put in extra hours and extra energy to teach and mentor their students, and it is worth noting that the students see and appreciate this sacrifice. Coincidentally, Margarita is an experienced instructor in online courses, and her insistence on communication is no small feature of her pedagogy. In fact, according to her, “technology enables immediacy in communication” as she uses a variety of tools to enhance her ANGEL sites.

For all of her teaching, Margarita says, “The most important thing is that I want them to enjoy learning and feel it is worthwhile. I want them to feel that they have learned something that has opened their minds.”

The Center for Teaching Excellence Teacher of the Month mug is once again in capable hands.