

What Motivates People?

A sense of **autonomy** for students means that they feel some sort of control in the class. Offering autonomy can include providing choice, allowing for student suggestion, and especially *acknowledging students growing expertise in the topic or course*.

- As young adults, gaining autonomy is particularly important if they are to mature.

A sense of **belongingness** means that one feels accepted as a valuable member of the group and wants to contribute to the group. Showing mutual respect for others is a major way to convey that they “belong.”

- Every human being wants to “belong” and be accepted as s/he is.

A sense of **competence** means that a student believes that s/he is capable of learning and knows how to learn (e.g., has the strategies).

- Competence is a universal human need. Feedback about improvement is one of the best ways to support competence.

Students find **meaningfulness** in learning when they know *why* they are learning something, *how* it is related to the world, or why it has *value*—aesthetic, practical, or otherwise. Relating topics within the course helps build value for the course as students see the connections among concepts and ideas.

- Stressing meaningfulness can help create interest. Everything does not have to have a “vocational” value. Ideas themselves can be meaningful.

Find results of the National Survey of Student Engagement for 2013 (college students) at:

http://nsse.iub.edu/NSSE_2013_Results/pdf/NSSE_2013_Annual_Results.pdf#page=11

Results starting on p. 14 focus on collaboration, interaction with faculty, effective teaching practices and supportive environment.

Strategies for a Small Class

Autonomy
*Discussions are partially student-led and partially teacher-led, with teacher ready to jump in if necessary
* Be flexible with the pace of the class to allow for student learning
Provide choices
A circle seating arrangement so we can all see each other
Give students some control over topics for study and discussion
Encourage students to contribute, conveying that their thoughts are valued (rather than to evaluate them)
Ask for student contributions (e.g., articles)
Tell students how much they have learned as you progress in the course
Competence
*Hold students accountable (e.g., 15 one-page journal entries encouraged reading and thinking)
*Set goals for course. Explain how assignments and discussions contribute to end goals. Connect the material from one class to another.
Provide guiding questions/main ideas to help navigate large reading assignments
Assign substantial amount of grade to class participation (i.e., 30%)
Give students feedback on writing assignments: what they did well and what they can improve
Allow time for one-on-one help. This helps the prof learn what students don't understand
ω "Provide the opportunity to impress the professor" (1 student)
Belongingness, Mutual Respect
Get to know prof, classmates; make a "tent" with name and call other students by name
Questions posed by students are mainly answered by students ("students feel more comfortable asking/challenging peers")
Build a relationship of respect so that both student and teacher want to do the best for each other
Allow valuable discussions to "play out" rather than rushing to complete pre-determined questions
Talk to students about what matters to them both inside and outside of class
"Remember that we have lives too" such as going to football games, etc.
Meaningfulness, Relevance
*Make topic relevant to students' lives—try to find a connection
*Students give short presentations on topic of personal interest that is related to course material
* Emphasize usefulness and value of topic
Use interactive simulations
Encourage students to reflect on personal experiences that help illuminate a concept
Use different formats such as debates, student presentations, short activities

Strategies for a Large Class

Autonomy ¹
Provide choices
Show flexibility with “coverage” of syllabus if new topics come up in discussion or if students don’t understand concepts.
Allow for questions during lecture or ask general questions to the large group (redirects attention, fights boredom)
Give your students an opportunity to show what they know (e.g., poster presentations)
Competence
*Hold students accountable (require small assignments, like notecard at end of class with key points and a question; assign a rotating reflection every 2 weeks)
*Give students feedback on writing assignments: what they did well and how they can improve
Give daily assignments so students can see what they are learning
Post PowerPoints online for more detailed notetaking (“I feel I am learning for the sake of learning rather than for an exam.”)
State daily/weekly goals and the end goal for the course
“Build on” rather than “review” the topics for class lecture; this supports learning better
\$ Offer rewards, conduct competitions (only 1 of 19 students suggested this)
Belongingness, Mutual Respect
*Break the class into small groups or partners for activities; assign students to “learning groups” “It helps make the class feel smaller.”
*Prof makes an effort to know students, shares personal stories (if so, “I do not want to let him/her down”)
Unpreparedness “shortchanges the unspoken contract of respect that students should have for teachers and teachers should have for students”
Small group discussions help students “develop respect for others’ ideas and abilities
Do not schedule meetings during office hours
Meaningfulness, Relevance
*Give real life examples and tell stories; topics applied to “real world” such as careers
*Emphasize usefulness and value of topic
*Assign one project or presentation in lieu of a paper; leads to more engagement and retention
*Use a variety of formats in class (lecture, project, discussion) and add variety to lecture (e.g., video)
Prof has “stage presence” that indicates s/he wants to be there and wants you to understand material; show your enthusiasm for the topic!
Vary the PowerPoint format! Add activities, demonstrations

¹ According to research by psychologists Deci and Ryan, when students feel autonomous, they have greater conceptual understanding, better grades, increased persistence at school and in sports, higher productivity, less burnout and greater levels of psychological well-being.