



# ACE IT! Quality Enhancement Plan: The ACES Project

ACE IT! NEWSLETTER

The Newsletter for Lamar's Quality Enhancement Plan:  
Active & Collaborative Engagement for Students

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## Classroom Discussion: Professors Share Favorite Strategies for Engaging Students

By: Mary Bart in Effective Teaching Strategies

In the typical college classroom a small handful of students make the vast majority of comments. As a teacher you want to create a classroom environment that helps students of various learning styles and personalities to feel comfortable enough to contribute as well as understand the importance of class preparation and active participation. To reach this goal requires a constant balancing act of encouraging quiet, reflective students to speak up and, occasionally, asking the most active contributors to hold back from commenting in order to give others a chance.

On *The Teaching Professor's* LinkedIn Group we asked members to share some of the strategies they use to engage students in discussion, manage the dominant talkers and the nontalkers, and steer a discussion that's gone off track. Nearly three dozen faculty members shared their techniques for prompting discussion. Below are excerpts of just a few of the strategies shared.

**Bob Burdette, Assistant Professor of Accounting, Salt Lake Community College:** No one method works for me to get my non-talking students to speak and the talkers to be quiet and listen. So, I try to change up the tool I use to get the desired results. On one day I will start working a problem on the whiteboard. I'll then give the marking pen to a student and thank them for volunteering. They get to come to the board to work the next part of the problem. After they are finished they pass the pen to another student to continue work on the problem. We continue this process giving as many students the opportunity to come to the board and teach small parts of the problem to the rest of the class. To remove the anxiety of coming to the board we give the student at the board the authority to ask for help from all the students still seated.

Another day I'll pass out two or three poker chips to every student. As we begin the discussion I ask each student to give me back a chip each time they answer a question. Rapidly the talking students use up their chips. Since they can no longer speak in the class it leaves the non-talking students to answer the remaining questions.

Another day I'll bring a deck of cards to class and allow every student to select one from the deck. Once I begin working a problem I'll stop and draw a card from the deck. Any student with a card higher than mine has to come to the board and continue working on the problem. If I have the higher card then I have to continue working the problem.

**Warren Dittmar, Professor of English, Miami Dade College:**

A good foundation for interactive conversation is a relaxed atmosphere and an understanding by students that their ideas and opinions are important and will be accepted and entertained. Students must feel that their comments are going to be listened to and sincerely responded to. Establishing student trust and acceptance is an important aspect of their participation.

As an example of one technique that I use in my classes, I have a Burning Question Period that starts just before the beginning of class and runs through the first five or ten minutes. Students can ask any question about current world happenings, national problems, or any important issue to them. Their questions are always varied and create general discussion that includes vocal students as well as more reticent students. The issues are usual hot issues and generate strong reactions and controversy. They are required to substantiate their positions. This technique has generated regular interactions and open communication.

**Erica Kleinknecht, Associate Professor of Psychology, Pacific University:**

I find that in lecture classes, most students don't read before-hand, they do so after class. When I want discussion, I create a series of writing assignments due at the start of select class periods. This gets them to collect their thoughts before class so they don't feel pressured to come up with something on the spot. Many students are afraid of being wrong. I also do what others on this list have suggested: small group discussion with one delegate who reports to the whole class. When I do both in one class, I get many more talkers.

**Chitu Okoli, Associate Professor of Management Information Systems, Concordia University:**

Clickers are quite helpful. You ask a question, give people time to think about it (and they are allowed to discuss with their neighbours first), and then click in their multiple-choice responses. Before you tell the students the right answer, you ask people from each answer group (e.g. those who answered A, B or C) to justify their responses. This gets a wide variety of people to talk who wouldn't otherwise because 1) everyone has time to think and commit to an answer before you ask them to talk to the class; and 2) different people give different answers, so it's not always the same 5-7 people talking every time. Of course, even then, the 5-7 people problem pops up, so after these people have responded twice or so, you ask to hear from people who have not yet spoken. This approach has helped me hear from a lot more students, especially the more thoughtful but otherwise silent ones.

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Bart, Mary. (2012, July). Classroom discussion: Professors share favorite strategies for engaging students. *Faculty Focus*.



## Center for Teaching and Learning Enhancement

We hope that all the Adjuncts who attended this past week's "Lunch and Learn" Adjunct event were happy with the results. We had a great turnout, and many adjunct instructors from across the disciplines of Lamar enjoyed both lunch and conversation, and got to hear about the varied services provided by the Center for Teaching and Learning Enhancement. There will be several more Adjunct-oriented events coming up next semester. For those of you who couldn't attend because of the time of the day, we will be sure to schedule some of our upcoming events at different times.

### **NEW FACULTY -- Next Lunch and Learn -- Mark your Calendars!**

The next event hosted by the Center for Teaching and Learning Enhancement is a Lunch and Learn focused on New Faculty. THURSDAY, November 29th, from Noon to 1pm, in the Lamar Dining Hall.

The group will hear a brief presentation given by Dr. Amy Smith, herself a relatively new tenure-track faculty member serving in her fourth year at Lamar. Dr. Smith will discuss some of the research and teaching opportunities she has had at Lamar (she is a recipient of both a Lamar Research Enhancement Grant and is a Developmental Leave recipient), before leading a discussion of the situations and issues involved with being a new Faculty member. So, new faculty, please join in this event, for free food and an opportunity to meet fellow faculty. How to attend? -- simply show up! Come to the Dining Hall, go to the cashier's desk and sign in. Then get your lunch in the Dining Hall and come to the Private Dining room, which is a room located to right of the cashier. (Turn right from the cashier table, go to the right corner, and you can't miss it). Call the CTLE, or [e-mail](#), with any questions. Hope to see you there!

**Lunch & Learn: New Faculty**

*Tell me, I forget.*  
~~— Show me, I remember. —~~  
Involvement, I understand.      Benjamin Franklin

## Resources

Promoting Academic Integrity in Online Education:

Here is an online PDF, available for FREE, giving information about Online Plagiarism. It gives both details about the new problems of cheating in the online world, and offers tips for how to structure classes to prohibit and minimize the problem.

[facultyfocus.com/wp-content/uploads/images/promoting-academic-integrity-in-online-edu.pdf](https://facultyfocus.com/wp-content/uploads/images/promoting-academic-integrity-in-online-edu.pdf)