

Advice and Tips from Large Classroom Instructors at UTK

Instruction in a large classroom can be different than it is in a small or medium size classroom. Faculty have to **think more intentionally about how they engage their students in the learning process**. While there are several resources on best practices in large classroom instruction, arguably, the best resource is advice from large classroom instructors. In this document, we share four tips offered by large classroom instructors at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Stan Guffey, *Senior Lecturer in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology*

Stan Guffey indicates that creating immediacy with students is important. There are two ways he believes in doing so:

- 1 Move around the learning space.
- 2 Respond quickly to inquiries and emails.

These actions aid students in asking for the help they need. Additionally, responding quickly to emails and inquiry from students fosters a sense of mattering which is an important factor is **student success**.

Beth Schussler, *Associate Professor in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology*

Beth Schussler has developed a particular way to create **equality of voice** in student participation.

- Students discuss question.
- 30 seconds before the end of the discussion, she calls out the name of a student at random draw from note-cards.
- That student is responsible for sharing her/his/their answer.
- She allows the student to state (if they wish) that the answer comes from the group.

Her reasoning behind this is that more than just a few students are answering questions in the classroom. It is also an **effective form of formative assessment**. Both instructor and students get **immediate feedback** on students' level of understanding.

Ken Baker, *Senior Lecturer in Economics*

Ken Baker asserts **clear communicating is vital in large enrollment courses**.



DETAILED MONDAY EMAIL SENT TO ALL STUDENTS

- Topics that will be covered
- Assignments that are to be completed + dates and times they are due
- Assessments that will take place during the week

This practice is a good provides students with a **road-map for success** for the period. Additionally, he identifies students who are not doing well and sends them a personal email stating where they are lagging behind. This obviously **builds a connection between the student and instructor** which is particularly important in large classroom settings.

Elliott Spengler, *Graduate Research Associate in Psychology*

Elliot Spengler creates a distraction free and connected classroom by not allowing devices in the classroom (laptops, phones, tablets, etc.). He provides students with his rationale based on the literature about effective learning

| DISTRACTION FREE CLASSROOM (NO ELECTRONICS)

- 1** Writing down information helps student remember material better.
- 2** Removes the largest distraction that students face in today's classroom.
- 3** It facilitates students connecting with one another in the classroom.

Elliott finds that before and during class, he sees students speaking to one another about the topic and their lives. **Peer to peer engagement is an important factor in creating connectedness to the academic environment.**

These are just a few tips that some of the best large classroom instructors at UTK had to offer. For more of their insights, review this [video](#). For more information on large classroom instruction, visit the Teaching Resources section of our website at teaching.utk.edu.