

Presentation Handout

Radical Ideas for Improving Student Engagement:

Changing up Testing & Grading and
Leveraging Student Input on Class Policies

AVTE Conference:

Saturday, Aug. 1, 2:30 pm Rm.1

Presenter: Dennis Lopez, M.Ed.,LVT,FVTE,VTES
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**This handout is a preview of the presentation.
There will be many additional slides and notes
provided at the conference**

Presentation Abstract

College instructors continue to be confounded by a decline in student engagement leading to increased absenteeism and tardiness, declining rates of assignment completion, and lower scores. As instructors struggle to find methods to improve student engagement, frustration mounts leading to teacher burnout.

This presentation will feature a review of several radical and novel ideas which can easily be implemented in the classroom and will get students more involved in their own learning and participation in the course

The first idea will be to look at testing in a new light. Students are notorious for fearing tests, whether it be from negative experiences in earlier education, or criticism from secondary instructors or parents, or simply that they do not know how to student for college level examinations. This presentation will discuss alternatives to traditional testing: using open-note testing as a motivation technique for students and looking at grading in a new light. Using input from several veteran university instructors this idea will focus on how to incorporate open-note exams early in the course to help students identify testing modalities for the course and to help students improve their own note-taking skills, an ability they can carry on to other coursework. Additionally, the presentation will deliver some new thoughts on grading assignments and exams.

The second radical idea will be to involve students in the writing and enforcement of course policies on several subjects: impact of tardiness and absenteeism on course grades and assignment completion requirements. Students have shared on many course evaluations in community colleges and at the university level, they want some flexibility in attendance requirements and due dates for assignments. Several university professors have developed methods for involving students in decisions regarding such policies.

Although long-term instructors might be apprehensive about such radical ideas, this presentation will ask the instructor to approach such concepts with an

open mind to explore the possibilities for increasing student involvement and engagement in their education.

Presentation Objectives:

- **At the end of this presentation, the attendee will be able to incorporate open-note exams into the course for the purpose of improving exam scores by a minimum of five percent and improve student note-taking skills.**
- **At the end of this presentation, the attendee will be able to challenge their own view of grading and incorporate new policies and ideas from veteran university instructors.**
- **At the end of this presentation, the attendee will be able to introduce the concept of student involvement in course policies for the intention of improving student involvement and engagement in their learning.**

Presenter Background:

Dennis Lopez, M.Ed., LVT, FVTE, VTES, has over twenty years of instruction and course development experience in Veterinary Technician education, including first year coursework in animal behavior, handling, and student success courses; and second year coursework in Anatomy, Biology, Dentistry, Diagnostic Imaging, and VTNE review courses. The presenter has twenty years of experience as a CVTEA-accredited Veterinary Technician Program Director with Pima Medical Institute, starting the first VT program for the Pima Medical Institute Corporation.

The presenter holds a Master's Degree in Educational Leadership from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and has attended multiple conferences on student success, student engagement, and student learning.

Mr. Lopez states: “It is an honor to present at the AVTE conference, the premier conference for Veterinary Technician/ Nursing educators and directors. Attendees can learn strategies for not only improving their own teaching, but they can learn strategies to improve student outcomes and overall college success.

As an undergraduate, how did you prepare for an exam?

[illegible]

Some Keys for re-thinking the positive effects of Open-Note Exams early in the semester?

- Helps students identify how they should be taking notes and/ or handling supplemental handouts during class
 - Will ultimately improve Note-Taking skills
 - Can help with student test-anxiety early in Semester
 - Will help students read test questions more carefully as they will want to know where to find information in their own notes
 - Great preparation for work environment which will require them to embrace and acclimate to new concepts learned at their place of employment
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Thoughts on Open-Note (Open-Book) testing early in semester:

[illegible]

[illegible]

- Instructors must be ready to give up certain authorities
- Have normal syllabus prepared with black sections for students to discuss and work on Day 1 or 2 of semester
- Guide students in an understanding of the structure of a course syllabus/ policies
- Be ready to be flexible with due dates and penalties

- Lead student discussions in college requirements and what they mean
- Class policies can be tied to the VT student's ultimate career goal (missed deadlines may have serious consequences for the patient)
- **Thoughts on Co-Created Course Policies**

Final Thoughts for possible implementation:

