As societal expectations about attending college have grown, professors report increasing numbers of students who are unprepared for the rigors of postsecondary education—not just more students with learning disabilities (whose numbers have more than tripled), but students (with and without special admission status) who are academically at-risk because of inadequate reading, writing and study skills.

Faculty—those at the front line of interactions with students—can make a difference by using “learner-centered” teaching techniques and approaches that help at-risk students raise their and successfully complete their studies. When we, as teaching professors, engage students and create the conditions to enable at-risk and under-prepared students to develop academically while maintaining high standards and high expectations, then they can graduate with good grades.

As educators, we have an obligation to all of our students, including those who arrived unprepared. We, both as members of an institution and as individual professors, must use a myriad of actions that will provide unprepared students with real opportunities for success. If we do not, we are simply setting these students up for failure and, at the same time, only pretending we have somehow fulfilled a moral obligation of providing opportunities to our diverse population in today's society. (Gabriel, 2008, p. 4).

SETTING THE SCENE:
Learner-Centered teaching begins with a detail and explicit syllabus that includes learning outcomes, defines roles & expectations, and clarifies how students will be graded. Students need to know the “what and why” of the course material, and how this will be useful to them. This means we must clearly help students understand the relevancy of the class. This all must be done with ENTHUSIAM. At the same time, “interest” in the students and who they are must be demonstrated!

Begin with learning your students’ names. Help them learn each other’s names. Some ways to do this include the following:
1) individual 10 minute office hours interviews for bonus points
2) 30 second introduction exercise
3) Find someone who… or coat of arms exercises
4) Use name plates
5) Prior Knowledge and Background Surveys

Begin the semester with a goal of developing your class, or program, to be a community of learners. Ask a commitment from your students. Set up ground rules for a respectful atmosphere. Most importantly, used engaging meaningful educational activities during class so that your lecture is interactive! Consider using the following activities:
1) Voting on questions regarding course concepts or information (also sharing votes, discussing votes, and re-voting)
2) Write-Pair-Share Activities (using 3x5 index cards or a half sheet of paper)
3) The Meta-cognitive Moment Activity (see slide on PPT)
4) The One-Minute Paper (from Angelo & Cross, 1993)
5) Memory Matrix (Angelo & Cross, 1993)
6) Problem Solving activities (or use scenarios for application activities)
7) Use Exam or Assignment Wrappers for having students “thinking” about their own learning and studying.
8) Re-represent Information Activities (including students making vocabulary cards with pictures, making diagrams, creating sequence charts, etc.)

Create multiple ways students can demonstrate their learning. “The more scores you have, the more accurately the final grade will reflect student learning” (Wankat, p. 89).

Ideas on some ways to do this:
1) exams & quizzes
2) projects (i.e. posters)
3) create a web page design
4) in-class responses or short writings
5) research papers
6) and more…. (faculty can get together to share ideas!)

OTHER IDEAS FROM TODAY’S PRESENTATION: (YOUR NOTES!)

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Other nuggets (or quotes to remember….)

Actions of individual faculty members improve the chances of success.

…Regardless of individuals’ prior academic history…When professors treated the students as academically capable and held them to high standards" in an environment of respect and integration, students-- all students, even those who were admitted as underachieving or unprepared students—achieve an increased level of performance. (Blose, 1999)

AND…

From Svinicki (2004) “Many students have never been exposed to. . .different ways to approach studying or even to the idea that there are different ways to study……We can help students learn about different strategies and when to use them” (p. 124).

Thank you for having me and for participating in today’s workshop. Kathleen F. Gabriel