

Students' Voices on Learning and Teaching at Delaware

In Fall 2007, **170 undergraduate** students who have served as Blue Hen Ambassadors and Resident Hall Assistants answered questions about their learning experiences at UD. The students' responses to questions about their learning are listed below. Comments are organized into related categories. The numbers in parentheses represent frequency of categories.



What do instructors do that helps your learning?

Using variety of teaching approaches in lecture (98): Variety in the style of teaching (not doing the same thing everyday). Switching around the learning style in the class is helpful because it is not boring. Using other techniques rather than just lecturing. More than just reading slides. Presenting material in an organized manner. Having a variety of activities for each topic that keep the material interesting and fun.

Using technology and media: Using a variety of media for presenting information helps to reinforce material. Power point is very helpful. Providing class notes and other resources online, in WebCT (so students can take notes only to clarify main ideas). Selecting textbooks with online help websites.

Engaging students: Professors keep us involved, make us share our ideas with the class. Engaging the class with thoughtful questions, and discussions. Interaction helps a lot. Stimulating critical thinking. Asking questions to keep attention. Interacting by asking questions in class to students, debating with students, challenging students' answers in order to help develop them. Active and open forum discussions. Making class more interactive.

Providing relevant examples/explanations (40): Instructors give examples that enhance the material. Giving an in depth explanation with a real world application rather than abstract ideas. Real life, current examples are helpful. Giving useful examples that relate to us and our generation. Explaining thoroughly until students understand. Willingness to slow down on difficult topics.

Being available for help (31): Providing office hours and spending time with students. Meeting you individually for help. Availability and willingness for help. Offering students many methods of contact - e.g. email, office-hours, phone, etc. Offering extra help. Listening to the needs of students. Sincere and personal effort at talking to you and helping you out of class.

Providing reviews (22): Reviewing previously covered material. Broad review is helpful. Holding review sessions. Providing sample tests, practice exams, past exams, class notes, and study guides help us a lot to study. Homework to keep up with work and check understanding. Giving test reviews before exams to increase confidence in success.

Caring about students (22): When instructors form a trusting relationship and seem to care about you as a student by transcending the student/professor relationship, it truly helps my learning. Being personable; a teacher who is friendly and approachable is much easier to learn from because you notice them as a real person. An instructor may be informed, but his/her opinion may overshadow it, and it makes a difference when he/she remains humble. Friendliness of professors helps us learn. Having good student-teacher relationships help aid my learning. Understanding that students are taking other classes, and involved in various social activities. Making jokes and using humor and anecdotes keep students engaged.

Communicating interest and enthusiasm about subject (21): When instructors are passionate and engaged about what they are doing it makes you want to be a better student. Enjoying in, and being excited and enthusiastic about what they teach keeps students interested. Being passionate about the topic.

What do instructors do that helps your learning? (continued)

Treating students with respect (17): Respecting what I have to say. Instructors do not make you feel stupid. There is no “dumb” question. They treat us like adults, like people with informed opinions; they give us time to say what we think. They are on the same level, not arrogant.

Communicating expectations (9): Providing a detailed, clear and organized syllabus. Clarity of instructions for assignments and material to be tested. Remaining consistent in expectations.

What do instructors do that hinders your learning?

Lacking variety and engagement in lecture (113): Teaching verbatim from power point slides, no enthusiasm, act like they do not want to be there, no connection with the class. Teaching straight out of the textbook. Lecturing the entire time. Just lecturing and not asking for any student involvement. Not caring about material. No illustrations, ways to visualize information. Do not work through problems, case studies, etc. Using the same format all the time (just PowerPoint, lecturing, etc) - some people learn by hearing, others by seeing; teach both types. Talking too fast. Going through material too fast. Rushing through material. Not taking time to make sure that everything is clear. Asking questions but give no opportunity to answer. Not referring enough to text. . Lessons should be more explanatory rather than exactly what the text says especially in science/math courses. Instructors who are disorganized and unsure of exactly what they are doing.

Testing and grading (38): Tests that are not reflective of what was taught in the class. Testing on material not being covered or thoroughly explained. Assignments for the sake of giving assignments, not reinforcing material.

Not being accessible and open to students’ concerns (27): Learning is hindered by professors who do not care. Not helping, being aloof. Being unwilling to listen. Not making extra effort when students need it. When instructors are not approachable it hinders my learning because if I feel a teacher is not willing to help, it sets a bad tone for the class. Office hours not coinciding with students’ schedule. Thinking we are just in their class. Some professors are not understanding of any outside circumstances, don’t understand we have other courses and work.

Treating students with little respect (24): Lack of respect for students. Discouraging students and speaking negatively. Making jokes about students when they volunteer and say a different answer.

Not-communicating expectations (12): Ambiguous expectations. Not making expectations clear. When my instructors are unclear about their expectations of myself and the class through a lack of structure and/or communication, it hinders my learning. Giving syllabus on the first day but not going through all aspects of class thoroughly. Not communicating what material is actually tested and imperative to know. Not following the syllabus.

Speaking with a heavy accent (6): A heavy accent makes understanding very difficult. Please make any effort to speak slowly and use handouts and examples to help us understand. Rephrase statements.

Providing little feedback (5): Lack of criticism of incorrect answers. Instructors don’t let us know our progress in the class. Not answering emails promptly. Graded papers aren’t returned in a timely manner.