

GET TO KNOW YOUR STUDENTS!

A Teaching Resource from the Walker Center for Teaching and Learning



WHO ARE YOUR STUDENTS?

Do you want to get to know your students right from the start of the semester? UTC faculty offer tips for getting to know the students in your class. Check out their strategies!

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Get to Know Your Students: Tips from Our Faculty

ENCOURAGE CONNECTIONS

Dream Job: At the beginning of the semester, I ask students to complete a Discussion Board (for on-line classes) or fill out a note card (for face-to-face classes). I ask them to share their major, dream job, relationship to our class topics, and an interesting fact about themselves. I usually get good interaction on the discussion boards and students find a lot in common with one another.



Seating Chart: I keep a seating chart on paper and in UTC Learn, which helps me learn names. I really try to utilize their names and encourage connections with students during group work in class.

Zoom Requirement: For my on-line classes, I have a Zoom meeting requirement, which helps me to put a face to a name and allow for more 'personal' interactions. I find it easier to build a rapport with each student if they're able to see my smiling face instead of just typed words and critical grading.

Meet the Faculty



Lynette Carlson
Health and Human Performance

Get to Know Your Students: Tips from Our Faculty

IT TAKES MORE CREATIVITY OFFLINE

Optional Face-to-Face Session: I currently teach an online course, but I met with the students in an optional face-to-face session on the first day of class and had everyone introduce themselves at the beginning of this meeting. Students shared which semester they were in the graduate program, and these students were already familiar with each other but not with me.



Face-to-Face and Discussion Boards: We will periodically have face-to-face sessions, which will allow for more personal interaction. I like Lynette's idea of requiring a Zoom session during the course. I have enjoyed classes which had discussion boards for introductions and asked students to attach their pictures to their profile to promote student recognition. The Quality Matters course had us each introduce ourselves via the discussion board, and I found this helpful as well.

Online Challenge: With online courses, it takes more creativity to engage students, but the discussion board is a nice format for this interaction. Giving them questions to answer about themselves is helpful and guides some of the introduction and interaction. Lynette gave some good examples of questions for these introductions. While my graduate students all share the same major, they can state the area of nursing that they work in or one in which they are interested.

Meet the Faculty



Leslie Moro
Nursing

Get to Know Your Students: Tips from Our Faculty

A NATURAL CONSEQUENCE

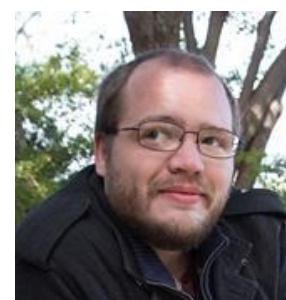
Natural: Getting to know my students is a natural consequence of the type of work done in a studio art classroom.



Critiques: Anywhere you ask students to apply their creativity and passions to course work, this will come through. This is further brought out and discussed in formal and informal critiques where students are asked to present and respond to each other — to the influences, ideas, and reasoning behind their creative choices.

Care, Interest, Feedback: What works universally, however, is simply demonstrating a care and interest in the students. For me, I do this by writing critical feedback, by inquiring when appropriate, and with a willingness to discuss myself. Because I like to model the behaviors I expect of my students, this takes the form of discussing my own work, as well as the insecurities and problems surrounding it.

Meet the Faculty



Derek Witucki
Art

Get to Know Your Students: Tips from Our Faculty

A MORE CANDID FORMAT

Online Challenge: I have found it challenging to get to know students in an online classroom format, and have implemented a few creative solutions in order to have a better feel for my students.



Studio Video: First, I do my announcements by Studio video. This allows the students to see me, in a more candid format, and gives them the opportunity to comment on the videos. This is an excellent function which allows them to comment at any point in the video, giving me a more real-time idea of their thoughts. When implemented in lectures, it provides a space for discussion and has been very engaging.

Reflection Assignment: Secondly, I begin each class with a “quiz”. It is a reflection assignment in which I provide them with a quote that pertains to medicine and ask them to reflect and comment on it. The open boundaries of the assignment gives them space to bring their personal thoughts to light and gives me significant insight into their thinking about medicine and nursing. Engaging them on an emotional level helps to remind them that their training expands beyond facts and allows me to get a glimpse at their view on the world.

Meet the Faculty



Christi Denton
Graduate Nursing

Get to Know Your Students: Tips from Our Faculty

GRAPHIC ORGANIZER

Graphic Organizer: During the first class meeting, I distribute a graphic organizer that includes the following prompts: Who/What Influenced Me Most, Interesting Fact: Personal Life, Interesting Fact Professional Life. When teaching a graduate level course, I often have students who are working as teachers. For those courses, I add this prompt: Grades/Subject Areas Taught.



Meet the Faculty



Julie Legg

School of
Education

Inside/Outside Activity Circle: Students reference the information from the organizer to support conversation during an inside/outside circle activity. Students form two concentric circles and exchange information with a partner until the teacher signals the outer circle to move in one direction, giving each student a new peer to talk to. I really enjoy using this strategy as it gives students the opportunity to respond to questions and/or discuss information with a variety of peers in a structured manner and fosters a collaborative learning environment.

Get to Know Your Students: Tips from Our Faculty

EASY AND IMMEDIATELY

Methodology of Studio Instruction: I echo Derek's comments above that in a studio art classroom one gets to know one's students fairly easily and immediately through the methodology of studio instruction: in-class work time and demonstrations, group critiques of in-progress and finished work, and assignments that necessitate a great deal of personal input from the student in the form of ideation, decision-making, problem solving etc.



Introductions via Artwork: I have tried different approaches to shape this process from the outset. Recently, I started out a general education studio class by asking the students to think about and share a work of art that resonated with their sense of self. I modeled this process by introducing myself to the students through an artwork that resonates with my biography and reflects my commitments as an artist and educator.

Meet the Faculty

Challenge of Large Classes: I am currently teaching both small studio and much larger lecture classes and find it difficult to adjust to the challenge of getting to know the students when there are 50 of them in a room. I am using tickets to solicit reflections and feedback on a regular basis, which helps me retain names and also get a sense of the students as individuals.



David Court
Art

Get to Know Your Students: Tips from Our Faculty

A SIMPLE ACTIVITY

Bingo Sheets: I have never done an activity on the first day of class to get to know students, but I finally had the opportunity to teach a smaller class in Fall 2019. It has a heavy discussion component, so I knew I wanted to learn their names as fast as possible and get them used to each other and talking with one another. I had them do a simple activity where they filled out bingo sheets and had to network with one another. During the activity, I enjoyed seeing that these classmates shared hometowns, majors, musical talents, sports fandom, and more with one another.

Meet the Faculty



Mark Johnson

History

INTRODUCE THE CLASSMATE

Meet the Faculty



Stephanie DeVries

**Biology, Geology,
and Environmental
Science**

The Crumpled Ball Technique: I've tried a number of different "get-to-know-each-other" activities. One of my favorites is having students write down their basic info — name, major — along with a fun fact about themselves. The fun fact can be anything: hobbies, skills, special talents, family history, etc., but something the student is proud of. Next, I have students crumple their own sheet into a ball and they get tossed around the room. Once we each have someone else's info, I start by introducing one of my students and then that student has to introduce the classmate named in the info sheet they "caught". I feel like this helps me get to know the students and also gives them an opportunity to identify shared interests among their peers. Plus, students who tend to be shy about introductions are often less shy when they aren't talking about themselves.

Get to Know Your Students: Tips from Our Faculty

I AM A RESOURCE

Advise, Explore, Connect: At the beginning of the semester, I always spend a bit of time introducing myself to students with the hopes that I can explain how I am a resource to them. Whether it is to advise on courses, career exploration, or the like, I hope that students think of me as a resource to help them during their academic studies and beyond. Of course, this doesn't allow me to get to know all of my students, but it allows me the ability to connect to a smaller group.

Meet the Faculty



R.J. Groh

**Political Science and
Public Policy**

INTRODUCE THEMSELVES

Meet the Faculty



Khalid Tantawi

**Engineering
Technology and
Management**

A Simple Introduction: Normally, I just proceed to the lecture. The students interact with each other and with me during the lecture, class assignments, homework assignments, and exam help sessions. But in some cases, if the class is small (say 5 or 6 students), I ask them to introduce themselves to everyone so that we get to know each other.

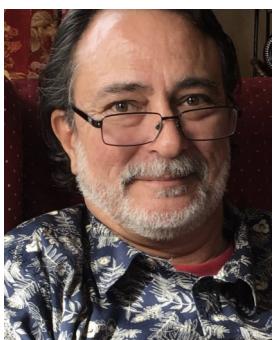
Get to Know Your Students: Tips from Our Faculty

READ THEIR MINDS!

Anonymous Surveys: Getting a handle on a class right from the start can be tricky but valuable. From day one, I get my students into the social observer's mindset by having them fill out an anonymous survey that parallels the national surveys they'll be studying in class. I make these survey anonymous, so that I can go through the survey questions by having my students raise their hands to signal the respondent's answers. In this way, we can compare the class stats to national trends. In the process, we start thinking about compelling societal questions. Students get a sense for the political and religious diversity of the classroom as they also preview the first part of the course. And I get a picture of the fault lines in the class for future debates.



Meet the Faculty



David Pleins

Walker Center for
Teaching & Learning

Weekly Questionnaire: A practice that keeps me on top of their thinking throughout the semester is known as the "Critical Incidence Questionnaire." This is an exercise that comes from Stephen Brookfield's *The Skillful Teacher*. Brookfield points out that being able to gauge our students' understanding, lack of comprehension, and frustrations makes us better able to adjust our teaching to communicate clearly. The CIQ is administered once a week at the end of the week. It only takes a few minutes for students to fill out the five questions dealing with: when a student has felt most engaged, most distanced, affirmed, confused, and surprised.

THE WALKER CENTER FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING AT UTC

MISSION

The mission of the Grayson H. Walker Center for Teaching and Learning is to promote teaching excellence and innovation that cultivates student engagement, learning, and success.

SERVICES

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

WCTL offers faculty training and support for best practices in teaching and learning. Seminars, workshops, webinars, book clubs, and one on one consultations are offered each semester on pedagogy and experiential learning. The annual Instructional Excellence Conference is an example of our ongoing commitment to faculty development.

TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION

WCTL provides instructor support for UTC Learn and other types of technology, such as video development and captioning.

TEACHING AND LEARNING INSTITUTE

A semester long course designed for new and existing faculty focuses on instructional design and delivery best practices.

TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT

WCTL provides assistance on course design based on Quality Matters standards. The Center also offers classroom observations and small group instructional diagnosis.

ORIENTATIONS

WCTL offers orientations for new and adjunct faculty. The Center also provides new student orientation sessions on experiential learning.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

UTC's experiential learning platform promotes hands on experience that builds competence in creative and critical thinking for students beyond the classroom.

