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Fast Five with the TFSC, September 2021

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Fast Five with the TFSC

A Newsletter for First Year Faculty at the University of Arkansas

SEPTEMBER 2021 THEME: CONNECTING BETTER WITH YOUR STUDENTS

3 Quick Tips from the TFSC Co-Directors:

1. In class sometimes talk about when you first encountered the material you are teaching and how you felt...excited, confused, was it difficult? Why is it worth it?
2. Use the first few minutes either of class or before class to talk about something that might be a connection. Anyone feel excited about Arkansas football this year?
3. Ask students questions about their experiences related to course content. Has your computer ever had a virus (information systems)? Have you ever had a virus (biology)? Has your dog had a virus (pre-vet)?

4. An Experienced Professor's Best Tip:

Professor **Janine Parry** of Political Science is a Baum Teaching Award winner, an Imhoff Teaching Award winner, and a former co-director of the TFSC:

“Something I learned from other instructors early in my career remains a go-to tool: use their names. I work hard to call them by name in email replies (even when they don't provide it ... try hovering over the address in Outlook and see if it pops up), when they answer questions in class (“Exactly! So sorry: what is your name, please? Devon! Yes, exactly the right idea, Devon!”), as they are filing in, etc. A second tool feels especially important in this environment: a class is a “we” or an “our,” not a “you” or a “your.” Examples: “Who remembers what our author offered as an example of separation of powers?” and “On Friday, we started talking about why a national Equal Rights Amendment has yet to be ratified in the U.S. Who can tell us when that process started?” These are small, daily gestures that build community ... something we know engages and retains our students. In addition, it also helps me feel useful and part of something bigger.”

5. The Take from a New Professor:

Iana Shaheen is an Assistant Professor in Supply Chain Management. Her students have spoken about her enthusiasm for teaching.

“Students aren't passionate about their subjects anymore, say lecturers. All they care about is job prospects,” Jessica Shepherd reports in *The Guardian*. Recent studies indicate that undergraduates these days do not necessarily expect to love their subject the way they did a decade or more ago. As a result, this negatively affects students' learning. I believe that to be successful, one must be passionate since passion makes challenges enjoyable. When students become passionate and interested in the material and the subject, the learning improves. Therefore, I try to resonate with students and connect with them at the “heart” level; I want students to care about the material, since only people who are passionate about something can make a difference. One thing I try to do is to communicate my enthusiasm using body language, voice, eye contact, and humor. I view my job as an educator to not only deliver the content but also share emotions and excitement. This helps me to create an engaging, inspiring, and entertaining learning environment in which students are able to connect their positive feelings to their learning goals. Another approach that helps to increase students' passion is the use of simple, relatable examples. I start every class with an interesting example that makes students excited about the upcoming topic. For example, last class on logistics we started with a story about how JB Hunt distributed the last book of Harry Potter. The students were excited to learn what strategies the company right next door employed to

“magically” deliver books across the world. Overall, I believe that if you can express your passion and enthusiasm for the subject, while you are teaching it, students reciprocate with increased levels of engagement, motivation, and enjoyment throughout the semester.”

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