

als. Innovative and reality based pedagogical approaches that are driven by the opportunity for students to create knowledge and experiences in a synergistic learning envi-

ronment just may be the key to providing a progressive and useful education in the next millennium.

Using Curriculum to Connect Psychology Students and Careers

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Faculty Perspective

I wish I had a dollar for each time a student said to me, "I really love psychology, but I know I can't do anything with a psych degree." If I had another dollar for all the jokes I've heard about what you can or can't do with a psychology degree, I'd be very rich by now. Unfortunately, psychology, like many Liberal Arts degree programs, is often seen as an interesting field of study but not a very "useful" degree in today's society. Certainly the value of liberal arts education has been touted by many people and goes well beyond the scope of this article (e.g., Hersh, 1997; Ridley & Gallaer, 1993). My purpose here is not to address this general issue, but to share with you the story of how our department responded to this paradox for our students. Hopefully our success story will help those of you in disciplines facing similar issues respond to your students' questions.

When our department developed and implemented an assessment plan several years ago, we elected to use senior exit surveys and alumni surveys as part of our methodology. It didn't take us long to realize that our graduating seniors and alumni felt there were many things we were doing very well. That was the good news! For example, our graduates believed our program prepared them quite well for graduate study (Bickes, Lawrence & Noble, 1997). These students were clearly seeing the connection between the skills and knowledge acquired in their undergraduate degree and success in their graduate work. However, only 14% of our students were going on to graduate school. The rest (actually most) of our graduates were going directly to work with their undergraduate degree. This finding was very consistent with natural trends in the discipline (McGovern & Carr, 1989). Our bachelor-level students were in a variety of different jobs and careers, ranging from social service agencies to business. For this group, the relevance of their courses for job preparation was not so apparent (Bickes et al., 1997). The issue for our department then was to find ways to help our students see the value of their psychology degree for career options that did not require graduate study. Our ultimate goal was to address this need without reducing the quality of the program for graduate school preparation. Although we have implemented a number of ways to accomplish this (see our web page at www.kennesaw.edu/psychology/), one of

the more innovative approaches we adopted was to require a one-credit-hour course called Careers in Psychology. We modeled our course after a handful of similar courses offered across the country (e.g., Georgia Southern University, Northern Kentucky University) that have demonstrated success. For example, a recent assessment of the course at Georgia Southern found a significant increase in clarity of career goals for their majors (Kennedy & Lloyd, 1998). I am teaching the first section of our new course this semester and have found the experience very rewarding. The course focuses on career planning and development issues for our majors. Using a variety of instructional methodologies we expose students to a wealth of information designed to assist them in clarifying, selecting, and pursuing a career in psychology or a related field. Students this semester are engaged in several active learning projects that are designed to encourage them to consider seriously the relationship of their major program of study and their career goals.

Student Perspective

When I first decided to become a psychology student, I thought majoring in psychology invariably meant two things: going to graduate school and becoming a psychotherapist. Despite my sincere passion for and fascination with psychology, I initially entered the major rather reluctantly and faithlessly. I responded to people's sometimes patronizing inquiries about my decision to major in psychology by saying that I stumbled into it somewhat by accident and default.

Of course, to echo an old adage, how much I wish I had known then what I know now. After enrolling in Careers in Psychology, I now realize with much confidence and conviction the vast array of opportunities available to those with either an undergraduate or graduate degree in Psychology.

The resources and information offered to students taking the course dismantle the myths of uselessness and limitation so often associated with a psychology degree. Internet exercises, alumni interviews, text readings, guest speakers, in particular alumni and representatives from the CAPS and Career Services Center, have provided tangible and practical insight regarding not simply the multi-faceted utility of a psychology degree but even more so, the degree's many advantages.

In response to this insight, I have found myself ebulliently repeating nearly everything that I have learned through the course to those I encounter. Clearly, the class activities have broadened and deepened my knowledge and understanding of the unique benefits, skills, and experience that a psychology degree offers, not only to aspiring graduate students but also to those seeking a career immediately following undergraduate school.

I truly believe that Careers in Psychology is a vital

and wise addition to the course curriculum. No doubt it will aid prospective psychology students in identifying how they can successfully apply and expand their interests to develop a fruitful and satisfying career. In fact, I think it's safe to say that every degree program, especially those included within the broad discipline of Liberal Arts, would inevitably improve each of their programs with the addition of a similar course.

IQI: A Strategy for Facilitating Reading and Discussion in the University Classroom

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Instructor's Perspective

University students and faculty often struggle from two different sides of curricular issues. For example, instructors struggle to find ways to encourage students to read and discuss information from textbooks. Students, on the other hand, often require incentives to read textbooks and to contribute to class discussions. A teaching tactic that I call an IQI addresses both these concerns. This acronym stands for an Interesting Point, a Question to Ponder, and an Important Issue to Discuss. The intent of this activity is to encourage active interaction with the textbook and among classmates.

I initiate the IQI early in the term, especially in classes with 30 to 50 students that include textbook materials that students are expected to read. I explain to students that they will be assigned to a chapter in the textbook and that they are expected to read the chapter and to note interesting items, important issues to discuss, or note any questions that they want to address in class. An alternative to assigning students alphabetically to chapters is to have students sign up for chapters depending on their schedules and areas of interest. Depending on the number of students in the class and the number of chapters in the textbook, three or four students are assigned to each chapter. They can then prepare their IQI items according to the established class calendar. Then, prior to addressing textbook material in class, I call on those students assigned to the chapter to lead discussion using their IQI issues. I include the students' contributions to the IQI as a part of the class participation component of the final grade.

The assignment of an IQI does not guarantee that students read all the chapters in their textbooks, but it does encourage them to read their assigned chapters and to prepare items to discuss. Some students are always more verbal than others and can monopolized class time, unless structures are in place to control discussion time. Other students will remain reticent, unless prodded to partic-

ipate orally in class. However, with an IQI assignment all students must contribute to classroom discussion at least once during the term. Another benefit is that the IQI is an open-ended task that allows students to address topics and concerns from their individual perspectives.

Perhaps the greatest value of the IQI is that it allows me to gain insight about my students. From what they address in their IQI's I can be constantly updated on students' perspectives. Instead of my determining what is important or interesting about the text, the students indicate by their selections what they deem worthy of class discussion. Thus, the IQI helps to maintain and value the students' perspectives on what is read and addressed in class. After several students have brought up their items for discussion, I can add my comments and clarifications, and address anything else that I consider important for students to be aware of in the text. For example, I can mention elements that might be included on course examinations.

I have found the use of the IQI technique to be productive for my students and me. I appreciate hearing their views on the assigned material and welcome the directions that their IQI's have led classroom discussions. Many students have, likewise, expressed appreciation for the technique. This supports my intent to continue to use the IQI in my courses.

Student Perspective

I am a junior, enrolled in a Children's Literature course with Dr. Kathleen Mohr. On the first day of class, Dr. Mohr did the typical first day of class stuff. She explained the course, the expectations, went over the syllabus, and read a few children's books. The course appeared to be similar to any other course: some reading assignments, projects, and a final exam with some weight being given to attendance and participation. I falsely assumed the attendance and participation points would be "freebies" provided you show up for class most of the time. In actually, this