

## **Learner Centered Teaching Strategies for Undergraduate Students in Multiple Disciplines at Alcorn State University**

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### **Introduction**

With constant change in the educational landscape and growing demands for multiple learning modalities, Learner Centered Teaching (LCT) seems a much-needed approach. The characteristics of LCT, of engaging students in the hard messy work of learning; skill instruction; reflection; allowing students to have control over their learning process and collaboration (Weimer,2012) are effective strategies yet are not implemented in most curricula. The thrust on delivery of content knowledge and less on application creates an imbalance in building student career competence. Ample research evidence demonstrates that LCT has proved effective in multiple disciplines. LCT is effective because students are engaged in the learning process, resulting in active construction of knowledge (Lattimer, 2015; Somani & Rizvi, 2018; Weimer, 2013). However, fewer than half of students' report being engaged in their education (Gallup Student Poll, 2017). This presentation will highlight LCT strategies implemented by a team of multidisciplinary professionals in the respective courses. Student engagement and outcomes will be highlighted.

### **Project/Presentation Objectives**

Alcorn State University offers a variety of programs which include Human Sciences, Biology, Education and Veterinary science. The demands for students to gain competitive careers is challenging instructors to develop high impact learning strategies to provide students the competitive edge in the job market. Undergraduate research, field experiences and project based learning are some of the proven effective in these majors. This presentation will highlight these strategies, their implementation and student outcomes in the aforementioned majors. The overall goal of implementing these strategies are 1) To enhance student understanding of the current trends and issues pertaining to their respective fields. 2) To build student critical thinking and problem solving skills which are essential in their careers and 3) To guide students to design their learning in skills needed for career preparation.

### **Methodology**

Instructors from various disciplines design their courses to incorporate a range of learning strategies such as research, problem-based learning, cooperative learning and field-based learning. Each presenter will showcase the methodologies adopted to implement each of these strategies as suited to their discipline. The student learning outcomes are measured for a period of a semester and the various objectives and outcomes for the respective courses are mapped to determine efficacy of these strategies. Efficacy of the strategies will also be correlated with student feedback from the courses. Additionally, the presenters will identify common strategies that prove effective across disciplines and share best practices for implementation in similar courses.

### **Results and Implications**

As students engage in these high impact practices, it increases their confidence levels, and they will learn to adapt to the demands of their careers. The skills and knowledge accrued through experiential learning will position students at an advantage to qualify for advanced degrees or competitive careers.

### **Future Plans/Advice to Others**

The Departments of Human Sciences, Agriculture, Biology and Education at Alcorn State is committed to providing students with enriching experiences to enhance their successful acceptance into professional programs and qualify for competitive careers. Usage of innovative programs, new course additions, restructuring old courses as well as constant review of the curriculum is encouraged to meet professional program requirements.

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