

Project Title: College Etiquette 101

Achieving the Dream, Increasing Student Persistence and Success

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Summary of Problem

Faculty, staff and students often complain that disruptive students make teaching and learning difficult and hinder the education process.

Purpose and Scope of Project

The purpose of this project is to create a video using scenarios that illustrate appropriate college etiquette in the classroom. This video will illustrate how poor etiquette is detrimental to the college learning experience and how poor etiquette can be transformed into positive behavior. Scenarios will include the use of cell phones, arriving late to class, side conversations among students, and overt expressions of disrespect. The video will be presented to the College community during Professional Development Week.

The overall storyline will show two students—Lawrence and Lakida—who come to CCP to learn, and are frustrated by the behavior of their fellow students. We will follow Lawrence and Lakida through their school day, as they take classes in English, math, computer science, and psychology. Narration will introduce and connect the scenes. In each class, a problematic behavior erupts.

Throughout, the video will be shot from two perspectives – first from that of one of the good students; then after a scene in which the teacher talks to the problem student and suggests better ways to behave, from the front of the class, as the formerly problematic student displays transformed behavior.

In a final sequence, one of our good students gives an oral report in front of the class. This sequence will be shot entirely from the front of the classroom. Our student looks out at classmates who are obviously bored and want to be somewhere else, at one who is texting, one who is sleeping. Only the other good student, also in the class, is paying attention. Problem behaviors erupt one by one—lateness, a side conversation, a ringing cell phone. Narration will connect to a replay of the scene in which the same student gives his/her report to an attentive, respectful class. The video will pose questions like, “Which class would you rather be in?” and tell students, “It’s up to you.”

Summary of Research Findings

Literature Search

A preliminary literature search indicates the need for a college etiquette discussion. Institutional Research was conducted to determine if any studies have been completed concerning the classroom experience; none was found.

Achieving the Dream Peer Institutions Search

After an extensive search of 26 peer institutions, the team determined that most do not have policies in place concerning college or classroom etiquette. Instead, many include classroom behavior guidelines in the Student Code of Conduct. None of the institutions depicts the information in an audio or video format. We believe that a video will enhance the effectiveness of CCP’s own Student Code of Conduct.

CCP Contacts

Allan Kobernick, Audio-Visual Services, provided exceptional insight into all that is involved in the production of a video. Because of his information, we realized that our project would have to extend past the Spring semester.

Kirsten Quinn, English/Communications, has been instrumental in guiding us in the preliminary scriptwriting process and will direct student and faculty actors in the scenarios.

David Watters, Assistant Dean of Students/Director of Student Life, was helpful in confirming what we've learned so far, and providing additional information about student orientation.

Ron Jackson, Dean of Students, is aware of our project and is looking forward to the completed video.

Data Gathering

Two surveys, one for faculty and one for students, were created to gather data on what each group perceived to be disruptive behaviors in the college classroom. We invited faculty to a Teaching Center discussion titled "The Impact of Classroom Behavior on Teaching and Learning: An Information Gathering Session." Six faculty members participated in this lively discussion.

Based on the information gathered from the Teaching Center session, as well as the information gathered from the 156 student surveys returned, we compiled a list of behaviors that would be the focus of the scenarios. We selected four behaviors, based on rankings of 1 to 11, as follows: cell phone use (7.5), arriving late to class (7.2), side conversations (7.5), and, overt disrespect (8.4).

A large percentage of students (68%) mentioned that they would feel comfortable talking to the instructor if they found the behavior of another student to be distracting. Over 25% of the students surveyed were comfortable talking about the distraction to their classmate either during or outside class.

By presenting these behaviors in a video format, we hope that more students will endeavor to exhibit proper classroom etiquette based on their awareness of its existence, and also help them feel more empowered to discuss any disruptive behaviors with their instructors and/or classmates.

Advantage to Students/Benefits to College Community

Students transitioning from high school, and even those who have been away from school for an extended period of time, often don't understand that there is actually a "code of etiquette" to be followed in college classrooms and other areas of the college. Interruptions caused by these students often discourage and distract other students in the classroom. Instructors may feel uncomfortable addressing these issues with the disruptive students.

Providing a "College Etiquette 101" video to all students should result in a more productive learning environment, thus improving not only retention but also students' grades. Such a video should also provide the groundwork for more positive interactions between students and faculty.

An instructor discussion guide, with suggested guidelines, will be created once the scripts for the scenarios have been completed.

Timeline

- February – Student and faculty surveys distributed
- March – Information gathering
- April – Scenarios development
- May – Script development
- June/July – Rehearsals with student actors; development of instruction guide
- Late July/Early August – Taping/Video production; Possible presentation during Professional Development Week

Evaluation Plan

Assessment will occur through survey feedback immediately after viewing of the video during Professional Development Week. A follow-up assessment survey will be distributed before the end of the Fall semester, to determine the impact, if any, of viewing the video.

Plan for Sharing Results

A report on the effectiveness of College Etiquette 101 in changing student behavior at CCP will be distributed during Professional Development Week in Spring 2011.

Attachments:

- A – Achieving the Dream Peer Institutions
- B – Teaching Center flyer
- C – Faculty survey
- D – Student survey
- E – Survey Results
- F – Chart – Ratings of Student Behaviors
- G – Scenarios