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2-18-2003

Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education

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Recommended Citation

APA Citation

Ellozy, A. (2003). Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education. *New Chalk Talk*, 1(10), https://fount.aucegypt.edu/faculty_journal_articles/4915

MLA Citation

Ellozy, Aziza "Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education." *New Chalk Talk*, vol. 1,no. 10, 2003, https://fount.aucegypt.edu/faculty_journal_articles/4915

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New Chalk Talk

The Center for Learning and Teaching Newsletter
Teaching News

The Center for Learning and Teaching
Academic Center, Room 212A
Tel. 20.2.797.6659, clt@aucegypt.edu

February 18th, 2003
Volume 1, Issue 10

Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education

The Seven Principles, as they are called, were first published in 1987, by Arthur Chickering and Zelda Gamson, in a study supported by the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE), the Association of American Colleges (ACE) and the Johnson and Lilly Foundations. These principles were extracted from decades of research on learning in higher education.

They were a huge success then, have continued to be refined, and are used in many ways since. Here we are including the condensed version of the principles with the hope that these principles will stimulate discussion and action to enhance student learning.

1. Good Practice encourages student-faculty contact.

Frequent student-faculty contact in and out of classes is the most important factor in student motivation and involvement. Faculty concern helps students get through rough times and keep on working. Knowing a few faculty members well enhances students' intellectual commitment and encourages them to think about their own values and future plans.

2. Good practice encourages cooperation among students.

Learning is enhanced when it is more like a team effort than a solo race. Good learning, like good work, is collaborative and social, not competitive and isolated. Working with others often increases involvement in learning. Sharing one's own ideas and responding to others' reactions improves thinking and deepens understanding.

3. Good practice encourages active learning.

Learning is not a spectator sport. Students do not learn much just sitting in classes listening to teachers, memorizing pre-packaged assignments, and spitting out answers. They must talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences, and apply it to their daily lives. They must make what they learn part of themselves.

4. Good practice gives prompt feedback.

Knowing what you know and don't know focuses learning. Students need appropriate feedback on performance to benefit from courses. In getting started, students need help in assessing existing knowledge and competence. In classes, students need frequent

opportunities to perform and receive suggestions for improvement. At various points during college, and at the end, students need chances to reflect on what they have learned, what they still need to know, and how to assess themselves.

5. Good practice emphasizes time on task.

Time plus energy equals learning. There is no substitute for time on task. Learning to use one's time well is critical for students and professionals alike. Students need help in learning effective time management. Allocating realistic amounts of time means effective learning for students and effective teaching for faculty. How an institution defines time expectations for students, faculty, administrators, and other professional staff can establish the basis for high performance for all.

6. Good practice communicates high expectations.

Expect more and you will get it. High expectations are important for everyone--for the poorly prepared, for those unwilling to exert themselves, and for the bright and well motivated. Expecting students to perform well becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy when teachers and institutions hold high expectations of them and make extra efforts.

7. Good practice respects diverse talents and ways of learning.

There are many roads to learning. People bring different talents and styles of learning to college. Brilliant students in the seminar room may be all thumbs in the lab or art studio. Students rich in hands-on experience may not do so well with theory. Students need the opportunity to show their talents and learn in ways that work for them. Then they can be pushed to learning in ways that do not come so easily.

Source

Chickering, A.W, and Gamson, Z.F. (1987) "*Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education.*" AAHE Bulletin, 39 (7), 3-7.

Please send comments or suggestions to allozy@aucegypt.edu