Teaching Tip Tuesday
Authentic Learning

Although higher education divides student learning opportunities into separate, independent courses, we know that the development of knowledge and skills does not respect these divisions. Instead, students grow intellectually through the interactions and intersections of knowledge and skills presented in all of the courses within their curriculum. Recognizing and harnessing this interaction is at the heart of what we call **authentic learning**. Authentic learning occurs when students engage higher order critical thinking skills in the investigation or evaluation of real-life problems or scenarios that cross disciplinary lines. Authentic learning experiences are associated with greater student valuation of learning and better long-term retention. Here are some ways you can produce authentic learning experiences for your students:

Inquiry-based learning

Students answer a question or solve a problem through application of knowledge and skills. Students may develop their own questions, or questions may be provided. These can often be tailored toward the career goals or interests of individual students. Examples include: research papers, field studies, case studies.

Using data from real research

Students analyze problems that have real significance using data collected specifically to help address those problems. These data allow students to see broader patterns or contexts of concept applicability. Examples include: epidemiological studies, social studies, political studies.

Simulations

Students use role play to develop skills at decision making, communication, and collaboration in complex scenarios. These exercises allow students to draw on the full range of their personal experience and knowledge. Examples include: mock counseling sessions, mock board meetings, public safety drills.

Creation of Media

Students apply content knowledge and technical skills to create content for targeted audiences. This allows development of communication and collaboration as well as insight into how diverse audiences may be reached. The project specifics can be tailored to individual student goals. Examples include: presentations, web sites, animations, videos.

Peer Evaluation

Students summarize, analyze, and critique the work of peers. They gain exposure to diverse perspectives, and build skills in communication through provision of constructive feedback. Peer evaluation can be used for any assignment.