

How Can We Reach Students, Particularly in Large Classrooms?

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Large Classrooms—what does this mean?

Class	Spring 2018 Enrollment
BIOL 2013, General Microbiology	475
BIOL 1543, Principles of Biology	381, 314
PHYS 2074, University Physics II	265, 220
CHEM 1103, University Chemistry I	Multiple sections of <200
CSCE 2014, Programming Foundations II	164
CHEG 4223, Automatic Process Control	102
MEEG 2013, Dynamics	95

My, oh my, things have changed . . .

- In Fall 2011, we offered Intro to Chemical Engineering in two sections of 40 students
- The class is now offered in both the Fall and Spring semesters, and we regularly have >80 students in the Fall semester



How can we successfully reach students, and particularly in larger classrooms?



My Basic Premise . . .

- I want students to feel comfortable with me in the classroom
- I want students to interact with their fellow students and me as part of the classroom experience
- This idea is fostered through communication, both in and outside of the classroom

A few of the things that I do . . .

Shoe Pile Mingle

- On the first day of class, everyone removes a shoe and places it in a pile
- Select a shoe that isn't yours
- Find the owner, who you introduce to the class



Comments:

- My wife, daughter (and probably others) think this activity is disgusting
- The Shoe Pile Mingle was actually voted by HowStuffWorks as the Number 10 worst corporate icebreaker
- The concept was good, but a format change was needed

A Better Activity

- Find someone who is different than you
- Get together and discuss things that you have in common
- Introduce each other to the class, noting something you have in common
- I then form groups of four by combining two pairs of students—these are initial working groups for future class periods

Build a Scorpion

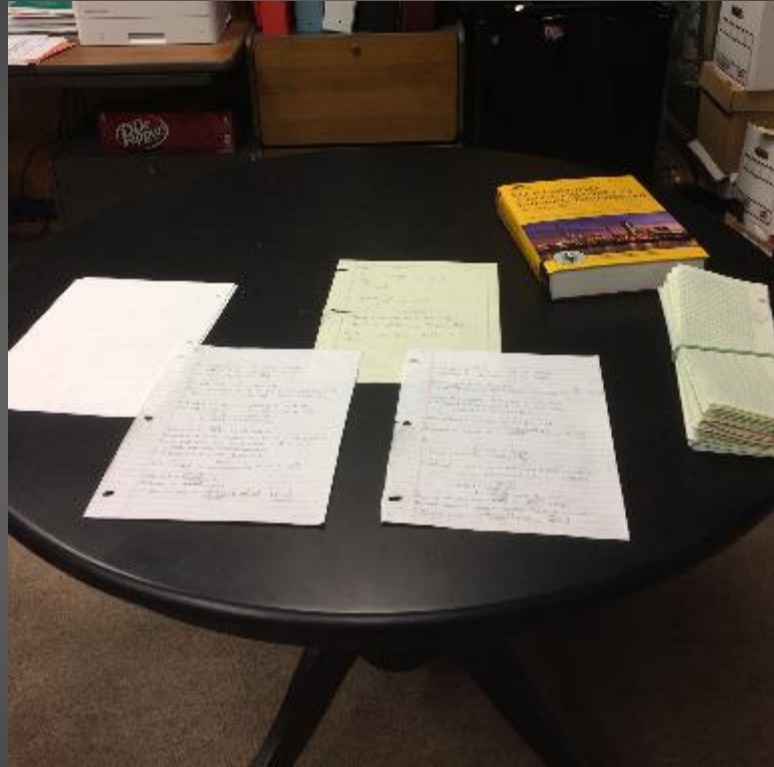
- Given tubing, fittings, a ruler and a tubing cutter, build a scorpion
- Typically used the groups from the previous activity
- Students have to communicate
- Problem: Cost was about \$200 for 80 students



Students can get creative . . .



The homework table . . .



Pause for a story . . .

- Ever see that glossed over look or the look of total boredom?
- Perhaps it is time for a story (from my past career or my time as a student)
- Stories need to be entertaining
- You might also ask how the students think the Razorbacks will do in the next ballgame



Review day before exams . . .

- Students are given an old exam (with answers but not the solution) two class periods before an exam
- The class period before each exam is reserved for review—some people work on the old exam, some don't show and some show, but are lost. This is a good time for one-on-one interaction.

Your turn: What do you do to reach students?