



High Impact Strategies for First-Year Seminar Instructors

In Their Own Words: Using Student Narratives to Understand What Matters Most in First-Year Seminars
Session CR 87

1. Concept Mapping (use during course planning)

(Saroyan & Amundsen, 2004)

- ★ List the things you think your students should be able to do as a result of taking the seminar.
- ★ Identify the most important concepts and organize those into groups or clusters with the course goals in the middle of the concept map.
- ★ Think critically about how you address the concepts in the seminar and evaluate whether specific assignments and activities align with those concepts and the larger course goals.

2. First-Year Student Interviews (course planning or anytime)

- ★ Describe your first year of college.
- ★ What types of interactions have you had with professors? Describe the purpose of those interactions.
- ★ What types of interactions have you had with student affairs professionals or administrators? Describe the purpose of those interactions.
- ★ What has been your favorite class? Why?
- ★ How do you learn best? Have you noticed a change in your study habits this year? Have you noticed a change in how you do homework? How? Why or why not?
- ★ What campus resources have you used? Were they useful?
- ★ What best piece of advice was given to you before entering college? What advice would you give to a student beginning college?

4. One-Minute Reflection

This strategy is great to use at anytime during the class. You can ask students to respond to anything related to the class, readings, assignments, discussions, etc.

For example:

- ★ What is one thing you learned in class today?
- ★ What question remains uppermost in your mind as we end class today?
- ★ How will reading and discussing _____ impact your personal development and interactions with others?



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3. Learning Portfolio (use as a culminating assignment)

(Erickson, B. L., Peters, C. B., & Strommer, D. W., 2006)

- ★ **Strategy #1:** Ask students to complete a self-assessment that evaluates their learning.
- ★ **Strategy #2:** Ask your students to develop a learning portfolio with several short written or class activities that provide information about their learning in various areas. You can provide a list of everything that should be included in the portfolio, or you can ask for a few specific assignments and allow your students to choose other assignments or activities that they think demonstrate their learning.

Sample AFYS 101 Learning Portfolio Categories (from AFYS 101 at USC Aiken):

- ★ Assignment #1 – My Time Management
- ★ Assignment #2 – My Learning Style(s)
- ★ Assignment #3 – My Learning About the Issue of Human Trafficking (related to first-year reading, *Not For Sale*)
- ★ Assignment #4 – My Learning Integrity
- ★ Assignment #5 – Reflections on My Experience

For more information, contact:

Stephanie M. Foote, Ph.D.
Director, Academic Success Center and First-Year Experience
University of South Carolina Aiken
☎ 803.641.3321 | ✉ stephanief@usca.edu

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