

HIDDEN RULES: Expectations and Assumptions about College Students

1. What is your driving force in the classroom?
 - In your field of study?
 - In your college and/or program?
2. In your classroom, who has power?
 - If you say that you intend for it to be shared, how is that negotiated?
3. What skills do you assume your students have when you begin your class?
 - What level of skills is expected of your students by the time they complete the class?
 - How do you inform students about their areas of strength or need?
 - What remediation – offered from beginning to end – is available for your students?
 - How and when do students find out about students services available and relevant to them?
4. Are your logistical rules stated or unwritten (hidden)?
 - Do you have hidden rules (unspoken expectations) around the issue of time? For example, tardiness, deadlines, makeup work, and attendance?
 - Are these explained in your syllabus, website, course or program materials?
 - Do you offer procedural guidelines and rubrics for expectations with your assignments?
5. To what extent do you expect students to think about their community, their own life, or the lives and worlds of others?
 - To what extent do you assume your students have had experiences outside of the communities they grew up in or live in currently?
6. What role does the syllabus play in your program and classroom?
 - To what degree do you expect students to rely on it?
 - How and when, and even how often, are students shown the importance of a syllabus or other program documentation?
7. What value to you place on the use of formal register in your classroom? In your field?
 - Why?
 - Do you teach students about registers of language?
8. In your field of study, what is the hierarchical structure of educational achievement (i.e., associate degree, bachelor's degree, etc.)?
 - How are students in your classes or programs made aware of this and the meaning of it?
 - Do students understand the variety of vocational options and wages associated with particular certificates and degrees?
9. When a student completes a degree in your program and gets a job, what effect(s) does that job have on his/her family – both positive and negative?
 - Are these hidden rules discussed with students?
 - If so, is it early enough in a program for students to make decisions and understand their choices?

NOTE: Any instructional setting – residence hall, study skills workshop, etc., may be substituted for “class” or “classroom.”

10. What type(s) of personality are best suited to the careers in your field?
11. What types of students do you get along with best?
 - What types of students bring out the worst in you?
12. What tools do students need for success in your programs (textbooks, reference books, lab coats and goggles, paint, brushes, calculating devices, etc.)?
 - Are these tools listed on your syllabus?
 - What assistance is available (and visible to students) for helping secure these tools?
13. How are students expected to dress for success – in and/or beyond your classroom?
 - At what point will students be expected to have the proper attire?
 - When are they notified of this expectation?
 - Is there assistance available for students with limited wardrobes?
14. What is the hierarchy of administration in your college or program?
 - Who holds power over what?
 - How and when is this explained to students?
15. What is your theory of assessment?
 - How are students' grades determined?
 - Do you give credit for process as well as product?
 - Is reflection built into your students' assignments?
 - Are students given choices and support when working on assignments, individually or in groups, choice of register?
16. How might hidden rules of socioeconomic class apply to your students' work in their careers?
 - How might this topic and other hidden rules be discussed in your class?

Source: Becker, Krodell, & Tucker (2009). *Understanding and Engaging Under-resourced College Students*. Highlands, TX: aha Process, Inc.