Creating an Authentically Engaged Classroom

Why active, applied learning matters even more inside, and three ways faculty make it happen.

Students in HEP experience nearly all of their education inside the classroom. There are no outside lectures, campus events, or chance meetings with faculty and students from other courses. The classroom encompasses all of that, so learning must be active and engaged, with real opportunities to practice, collaborate, and apply.

KEY CONCEPTS

1 Authentic engagement has four marks

Students have the opportunity to share their perspectives, the time to reflect, ask questions, and discuss ideas, feel welcome to hold different opinions, and feel encouraged to hear and express alternative viewpoints.

2 The classroom is the whole campus

Unlike students on campus, students inside cannot attend outside lectures or events, or meet faculty and peers from other courses by chance. The classroom carries that entire experience.

3 Engagement works on three levels

The day's topic, the practice of the discipline, and students' own experience. Engagement is strongest when all three are active from the start of class.

4 Application completes learning

Presentations, collaborative work, and projects that apply learning let students practice, reflect, and ask questions about the experience while faculty are in the room.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE IN PRACTICE

- Roll call transformed into a meaningful check-in
- Opening questions students apply to their lives
- Faculty circling back when students aren't ready
- Paired practice of real disciplinary skills
- Student-designed capstone projects with faculty support
- Peers listening to each other's thought processes

STRATEGIES YOU CAN USE

Turn roll call into a check-in

Open with a question tied to the day's topic that students can apply to their own lives. Provide examples when students are unsure how to reply, and circle back when someone is not ready to answer.

Have students practice both sides

Pair students, time the exercise, and switch roles, as in a journalism class where students interview one another. Practicing both sides lets them reflect and ask questions while still in the room with faculty.

Let students design the final project

In a capstone, invite students to formulate their own idea and support them in shaping and completing it: problem solving, thinking through resources and approaches, and applying what they learned.

Collaborate with another faculty member

Two faculty working together multiply the support available for student projects, and students benefit from sharing their questions and thought processes and listening to their peers' projects.

QUICK CHECKLIST

- ☐ Open class with a topic-linked personal question
- ☐ Give examples when students are unsure how to reply
- ☐ Circle back to students who are not ready
- ☐ Build in presentations, collaboration, and applied projects
- ☐ Have students practice both roles in an exercise
- ☐ Make space to reflect on the experience in class

KEY TERMS

Authentic engagement • Sharing perspectives, reflecting, questioning, and welcoming different viewpoints in the classroom.

Applied learning • Practicing the discipline directly through presentations, collaborative work, and projects.

Capstone • A final project students formulate themselves and complete with faculty support.