

### LASC MATH FACULTY SYLLABI WORKSHOP

#### Workshop Outline

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| I.   | The California Benchmarking Project at LASC<br>CBP within LASC Math Department           | Dr. Dan Walden, LASC<br>Dr. Lernik Saakian |
| II.  | Introduction: Syllabi as a Means to Organize<br>Student-Centered Instruction             | Tara Watford, USC                          |
| III. | Getting to Know Your Students Exercise   | Linda Larson-Singer                        |
| IV.  | Reading YOUR Syllabus from a student's<br>Perspective                                    | Group Exercise                             |
| V.   | Promote Student Success through Your Syllabus:<br>Designing a LASC Math Syllabi Template | Linda Larson-Singer<br>and Tara Watford    |

#### Workshop Learning Objectives:

- Become aware of what your syllabus communicates -- explicitly and implicitly -- to your students.
- Understand how a syllabus can be used as a communication tool in your classroom to promote student success.
- Conceptualize the role of faculty members as agents of change capable of making a difference in students' educational aspirations and achievement.

#### Workshop Outcomes:

- Develop syllabi templates that contain required information by LASC Academic Senate as well as student-centered information such as learning goals and expectations, your teaching philosophy and descriptions of the types of feedback and classroom assessment opportunities that will be provided for students.
- Set departmental standards for syllabi development and dissemination.

### **Common Perceptions of a Syllabus**

- First Impression / Introduction
- Road-map to a Course
- Contract between Instructor and Student

### **Student-Centered / Culturally Relevant Syllabus**

- Communication of High Expectations for Student Success
- Incorporation of Rigorous Learning Activities
- Consideration of Students' Academic Needs and Aspirations
- Provision of Multiple Resources for Academic Assistance

## Reading Your Syllabus from a Student's Perspective

Put yourself in the shoes of the student who wrote the petition that you were given. Think about the fears, concerns, responsibilities, and prior schooling experiences that this student arrives with when entering their next math course. Then, read through your syllabus as if you were this student on the first day of class. While reading the syllabus, answer the following questions from the standpoint of the student:

1. What is the tone of the syllabus? Is it welcoming? Encouraging? What issues of classroom behavior are targeted?

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2. How are the goals and objectives of the course communicated? How does the instructor plan for me to meet these goals? What skills will I gain and where can I use these skills (next class it prepares me for, real-life experiences that it will aid me with such as doing my taxes, credit card finances, etc.)?

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3. What role(s) does the instructor describe that shows her/his commitment to my success?

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4. Is there a variety of learning activities and instructional techniques that will be utilized in the class that spark my interest? Will I work with my peers or have the chance to do collaborative work?

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5. What do I do when I need don't understand a lesson? Receive a failing grade? Miss class or a test?

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6. How does the classroom learning activities link with supplemental instruction or other resources on campus? Where can I find these resources?

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Discussion Questions as a Group:

After reviewing your syllabus from the perspective of a student who has a history of failure in math, reflect about your own practices, knowledge of how to connect and engage students, and teaching philosophy. Discuss your responses to the following questions as a group:

1. What would you like to communicate to students about your expectations for student success on the first day of class?
2. What changes would you make to your syllabus to make it more student-centered? What things would you keep?

## Promoting Student Success Through Your Syllabus Designing a LASC Math Syllabi Template

In addition to the Syllabus Checklist requirements set by the LASC Academic Senate, there are additional ways in which a syllabus can communicate to students your commitment to and encouragement of their success. Some suggestions are listed below:

### TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

- Introduces you to your students and shows that you have been thoughtful about your instructional work
- Walks students through your plan for accomplishing course goals
- Describes the learning community you want to create
- Emphasizes what you value about teaching and working with students

### FRAMEWORK FOR LEARNING

- Outlines both what *you* will do to help students meet the course objectives as well as what the *student* can do to meet the course objectives
- Incorporates a wide-range of learning activities (collaborative, computer-based, etc.)
- Discusses a model for study skills (note-taking, completing homework, etc.)
- Encourages students to develop a self-awareness of why the content of the class can be beneficial for them to learn (what skills will they learn that can help them in the course that comes directly after your course?, what skills will they learn that will help them take a college credit (transfer level) course? What skills will they learn that will help them in their everyday life experiences?)
- Outlines how you will monitor and assess students' progress

### CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK

- Outlines the opportunities in which students can give input into your instructional techniques and course content and explains your willingness to make changes based on students' input (see classroom assessment handouts)
- Describes the various ways you will provide feedback to students (tests, homework, progress reports, monthly meetings, etc.)

### LINKS TO SUPPLEMENTAL INSTRUCTION / TUTORIAL RESOURCES

- Explicitly explains how course content will link to supplemental instructional resources (labs, Math Success Center "workshops", etc.)
- Describes how students can get extra tutorial help and where to go
- Encourages visits to Math Success Center and describes the resources available to students there

Resource: Grunert O'Brien, J. and Mills, B.J. and Cohen, M.W. (2008). *The Course Syllabus: A Learning-Centered Approach*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

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# California Benchmarking Project

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## Enhancing Institutional Effectiveness and Equity