

Include High-Impact Teaching Practices in Courses

The AAC&U identifies five “high-impact practices” (HIPs) that promote substantial benefits for student learning and student persistence, increased student engagement, and improved retention and graduation rates. High impact practices share common characteristics that make them effective strategies for teaching and learning:

- Students must invest time and effort in a purposeful task.
- Students interact with faculty and peers about substantive matters.
- Students receive frequent feedback about their work and guidance about how they can make improvements.
- Students connect disciplinary content with real-world experience when they apply knowledge and skills from the discipline to a real-world problem.
- Students discover connections between the curriculum, their learning, and personal experience through a reflective writing component.

Although research on HIPs (undergraduate research, learning communities, capstone courses, study abroad, internships and service learning) documents the association between HIPs and many desirable learning outcomes, few students participate in these activities. NSSE data indicate that only about 25% of seniors participated in one HIP during their time in college.

High-impact practices demand time and resources to implement. However, we can sometimes achieve the benefits of HIPs when we include small-scale high-impact pedagogies in individual courses. High-impact pedagogies include features that make HIPs effective. These activities reap the benefits of larger-scale high-impact activities and can be included in the courses we require students to take to meet degree requirements. While engaged in these small-scale activities, students can learn about the large-scale activities, discover how their learning improves when they participate in these activities, and discover how they can access the resources needed to engage in a large-scale activity during their undergraduate career.

Examples of small-scale high-impact pedagogies for individual classes include:

- Require students to make a short presentation during class.
- Revise a writing assignment to require students to prepare two or more drafts and use feedback on early drafts to improve their final submission. Design a peer review assignment for early drafts to minimize your grading burden.
- Create a community-based assignment that illustrates how course content connects to a practical problem.
- Connect students to relevant academic support resources: Require students to use the writing center, create study groups, or consult with peer tutors.
- Create mini-HIPs for the class: Case studies, a small research project directed at a new and relevant problem or question (not a canned laboratory exercise), a service learning

project, or a short-distance excursion in which students observe and experience practical use of course content in the field.

- Assign a low-stakes assignment during the first three weeks of the term to provide feedback to students. Identify relevant academic support resources and refer students to these services when needed.

Resources:

AAC&U (2008). *High-impact educational practices: What they are, who has access to them, and why they matter*. Washington, DC: AAC&U.

Kinzie, J. (2013). High impact practices and engaged student learning: Teaching practices that matter. Workshop presented at the University of West Florida.

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