

## MOTIVATING THE UNMOTIVATED

Students are in college spending their time and money because they *want* to learn and because they *want* a better life for themselves. Granted, they often don't know *how* to acquire what they want or how to make themselves learn what is presented to them. But, when asked what they want from the college experience, they say they want:

- To feel more than part of a crowd, that their individual talents and abilities are respected and deemed worthy.
- Teachers who are *real* people, who recognize them as human beings -- teachers who care about them -- not just their test performance.
- To be challenged, not decimated.
- Caretakers who check on them regularly, who support their individual learning, who inform them individually of their progress, and who assign a variety of tasks that give them the opportunity to learn in modes that fit their individual styles and that are designed to meet their level of learning.
- Teachers who talk at their level, who can joke and take a joke, and who let them talk and learn with other students.
- Clear, complete explanations and concrete examples, thorough but brief explanations of difficult concepts, and opportunities to have questions answered.

Students are not necessarily unmotivated or unwilling learners; they are simply uninvolved in the depersonalization of the traditional classroom. They *are* willing to learn; they simply may not be able to endure the way they are taught.

## DEALING WITH DISENGAGED STUDENTS

Get to know your students. Refer to students by name. Listen when they engage in informal chitchat. Get to know those in your class. Icebreaker exercises can be helpful to elicit and memorize names and pertinent details, such as majors, goals, and backgrounds.

Be prepared. Clearly articulate the learning goals for the class at the beginning of the course. Have your class time planned out, with lesson plans, including group activities, and have all your accompanying handouts, audio-visual equipment and other presentation necessities ready to go before class begins.

Assess their progress often through Quick Thinks and assessments and be flexible when assigning homework; consider work-life schedules to boost assignment completion rates.

Solicit feedback on teaching materials, homework assignments, and course content. Provide prompt and frequent feedback and encourage students to share and learn from colleagues when appropriate via pair and/or group work to encourage interactivity and participation. Answer questions, offer clarifications and real-world examples and use student feedback immediately by implementing suggestions where possible.

Offer positive reinforcement or suggestions for improvement.