Suggestions for the First Day of Class

1. Visit the room where you will be teaching before the first day of class. Check out the seating arrangement and practice using the technology.

2. Arrive early on the first day of class (and every day!). Organize yourself, welcome students as they come in, and chat with them.

3. Make eye contact with students as you talk, particularly in a large class; use the “U” model, looking at students along the edges and back.

4. Channel nervousness to be lively and engaged.

5. Invite students to talk about what it means to be a college student and ask why they are taking your class.

6. After presenting and discussing the housekeeping details (including important points in the syllabus), teach something. Demonstrate your teaching style and indicate that each day is an important day for students to attend.

7. Prepare, but do not over-prepare. Prioritize the material you want students to learn that day.

8. Know how you want to end the class and end it slightly ahead of time. This avoids the class ending on an incoherent or vague note.

9. Dress a little formally. Respect is a tricky issue, and it is always easier to relax after you have gained the respect of your students.

10. If you ask whether students have questions give them 5-10 seconds of silence before moving on. Tell them this is the way you will try to invite questions during the semester.

11. Respond briefly to their questions and try not to put off the answer until “later in the semester.”

12. Show enthusiasm for the subject, for teaching, and for students’ willingness to share the learning journey through the semester.

Based on an online discussion, January 2008; Mano Singham, Director, University Center for Innovation in Teaching and Education, Case Western Reserve University