Tips to Enhance Student Motivation

At the beginning of the semester

The rapport you and your students establish in the first few meetings can set the tone for the duration of the course. Hence getting to know one another, identifying goals for the course, and establishing a sense of community are key priorities during this stage.

- Distribute a questionnaire to gather background information on students, including prior knowledge and individual goals.
- Provide activities for students to interact with one another and establish a sense of community; encourage them to set up study groups.
- Outline goals of the course.
- Stress the importance of student responsibilities.
- Invite (i.e. require!) students to stop by your office in the first few weeks.
- Ask them to begin thinking about a topic for their first paper or other project (where applicable).
- Give early feedback on assignments (not necessarily graded).

Midway through the semester

A good time for stock-taking and evaluation of learning/teaching for students and instructor.

- Pause to revisit, reflect on, and re-evaluate learning goals and chart ahead.
- Hold individual midterm consultations (where feasible).
- Do midterm course evaluations.

Near the end of the semester

Pulling it all together

- Review, extend, apply.
- Use a problem-based approach to learning: give students a problem to solve, individually or in groups, which requires them to use a range of knowledge acquired from the course.
Throughout the semester

*Things you can do to keep your students’ interest, engagement, and motivation at a high level.*

- Encourage students to frame their learning in the form of questions, not answers
- Use collaborative activities (to encourage active rather than passive learning)
- Have student-led discussions and presentations
- Show you care about their learning
- Express your own enthusiasm about the subject
- Use one-minute papers periodically to assess areas of student understanding and confusion
- Build flexibility within the course design in order to respond to student needs and concerns
- Preface your remarks: make explicit the connection between what the class is doing that day and the overall goals of the course: where/how does it fit in the framework
- Continue to remind them of the relevance (based on what you know about their backgrounds and goals)
- Use analogies to make the unfamiliar familiar
- Help students make an emotional connection
- Use humor
- Incorporate variety
- Challenge them
- Be accessible
- Encourage them to ask questions about unclear or confusing content