

# **The First Class Counts!**

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Palo Alto College Convocation  
Week Session  
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# Goals for this Session

- Review the importance of the First Class
- Brainstorm: What Can/Should We Do the First Day of Class?
- Check our ideas against those generated by a group of professors at the University of Oklahoma after they visited each other's classes on the first day of class.
- Review and reflect upon some nuts and bolts examples.

# What's at Stake that First Class!

- **Blink** – the first impressions of our students are lasting impressions!
  - Psychologist Nalini Ambady studies on students –
    - Students given 10 second video clips of teachers (no sound)
    - Students rate teacher's effectiveness
    - Students given 5 second video clips of teachers (no sound)
    - Students rate teacher's effectiveness and the ratings of the two groups are consistent!
    - Students given 2 second video clips of teachers (no sound)
    - Students rate teacher's effectiveness and the ratings are compared to that of students who were in the teacher's class for a full semester – the ratings were essentially the same!

# What's at Stake that First Class!

- usnews.com “10 Warning Signs of a Bad Professor”
  1. The professor is boring.
  2. The professor is bummed out.
  3. The professor does not give out the syllabus.
  4. The professor isn't clear about the requirements and how much they count.
  5. The professor assigns an undoable amount of work—or no work at all.
  6. The professor has incredibly petty rules.
  7. The professor can't fill the whole class period.
  8. The professor seems unsure about the material.
  9. The professor presents material in a confused way.
  10. The professor never involves the students.

# What's at Stake that First Class?

- Knefelkamp's research: both teachers and students want to make a great connection that first class but neither group realized that the desire was mutual!
  - If the class is dismissed after passing out a syllabus and an assignment, the prime opportunity for building a great relationship with your students is lost! Set the tone the first class that class time is important!
  - Students are especially excited the first day of class and want to experience a great session – harness that excitement to build enthusiasm for your course content!

(Knefelkamp, L.) In Rubin, S. "Professors, Students, and the Syllabus," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, August 7, 1985, p.85.

# **What Can/Should We Do on the First Day of Class?**

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**How Many Did We Agree On?**

# Nuts and Bolts Ideas – Build Interest in Course Content!

- Spend some time talking about your own enthusiasm for the course material.
- Look for ways to connect the course material to the lives of your students. Use current events, editorials from local newspapers, or examples from your own life to build interest. Ask your students for examples from their lives, etc.

# Nuts and Bolts Ideas – Encourage a Community of Learners Atmosphere!

- Welcome your students as they enter the classroom.
- Introduce yourself – ideas
  - Personal biography
  - Educational biography
  - Teaching biography
- Allow the Students to introduce themselves
  - Use an Ice Breaker – ideas ([adulted.about.com/od/icebreakers](http://adulted.about.com/od/icebreakers))
    - “Expectations”
    - Incorporate a “Background Knowledge Probe” as a part of an icebreaker

# Nuts and Bolts Ideas – Emphasize Course Expectations and Requirements!

- Course Overview
- Departmental Requirements/Expectations
- Presentation of Material
- Expectations for Class Time
- Expectations Out of Class
- Instructor Responsibilities
- Student Responsibilities
- Assessment
- College Resources

# How Will Your Students Answer these Questions after Your First Class?



**Have a Wonderful Start to a Wonderful  
Semester with All of Your Classes!**

