

Faculty profile



Daryl Davies, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences

Daryl Davies motivates students with relevancy and passion

Congratulations on earning the General Education Teaching Award in 2019-2020. Can you describe how you motivate students in your general education courses?

The key to motivating students is to build relationships and provide relevant content. It sounds simple but I consistently say hello to students on campus, come to class early to discuss course content, and provide multiple opportunities for student feedback. Students tell me they can envision their success and career paths when they know someone believes in them. My teaching methodology involves consistently connecting with students while keeping course content as current and relevant as possible.

Over the years, I overcame several obstacles to keep students engaged. The key was to focus on current events. I noticed a generation gap in response to my course content, so I found topics that were contemporary and relevant to student's lives. For example, I took a basic course on toxicology and transformed it with relatable content and a new name: Mysterious deaths and poisons. Students still needed to learn the basics of toxicology, but the real-world, high interest application kept them interested.

In addition, I'm a storyteller, so I shared examples that allowed students to see themselves and their family members reflected in the studies. For instance, most students have family members who are directly impacted by diabetes or know someone affected by drug use, so students are more likely to engage in the course content when it is directly related to their lives.

For professors in other disciplines who would like to increase student motivation, what do you look for to let you know it's working?

I collect student feedback on a routine basis that helps me understand their experience throughout the course. Frequent reflection assignments and small quizzes provide data about learning from the lectures, and misunderstandings in the course content. I am constantly checking in with students formally and informally, which provides me with a better understanding of any challenges and simultaneously sends a message to students that I care.

What advice do you have for other instructors who are interested in doing something similar?

The more effort and enthusiasm you put into teaching the class, the more students will reciprocate. Enthusiasm is highly infectious and will spread. View the course through the eyes of the students and make the subject matter as interesting as possible.

Tips from CET

If you would like to incorporate current events into your courses, consider the following steps. For more information refer to the CET resource on integrating current events into discussions.

1. Align discussion of current events with the learning objectives.
2. Review and/or create classroom discussion norms with students.
3. Plan for discussion time for current events as they relate to course content.
4. Allow for unplanned discussions to help students feel acknowledged by actively acknowledging the topic, allowing for discussion, and closing the conversation.

[Daryl Davies](#) is professor of Clinical Pharmacy and the Director of the MS program in Management of Drug Development in the International Center of Regulatory Science.