Faculty Intention to Student Retention

Rethinking Assessment

Grades for college students are often tied to performance on summative assessments. In STEM related fields, women experience higher anxiety than their male peers. Students from lower-income backgrounds may experience increased anxiety about academic performance in testing contexts, which can undermine their performance. The repercussions of poor performance can be higher for lower-income students who often have less margin for error than higher-income peers.

How can we best support students while also maintaining course legitimacy?

**How do I reduce testing anxiety in my class?**

- Give students options to make the class and testing style fit their learning. Some options include:
  - Typed report or research paper
  - Recorded Zoom presentation
  - Written exam
- Develop appropriate vehicles of assessment that work for various groups of students and your class. If the suggestions above are not applicable, what method of testing would help?
- Set clear expectations from the beginning on what the course material will cover, how the projects will be graded, and what the different testing options will be.

**How do I make different methods of assessments fair?**

- Have clear parameters and learning objectives. This will allow for different applications of the same learning targets.
- Set a clear threshold of who is eligible to re-take a test and what the process looks like.
- Offer different assessment options based on class size and content. Larger classes might only have capacity for two options of testing methods instead of three, like smaller classes.

**Rubrics are critical to success**

- The challenge is to build one rubric for multiple styles of assessments.
- Good rubrics will make for easier and more consistent grading of projects/tests. Different levels of classes might require more specific direction than others.
- Thorough rubrics will give students clear guidance on what you expect from any method of testing.

**References**

- “Students don’t seek help when they need it”, Teaching Problems and Potential Strategies, Eberly Center, Carnegie Mellon University