

Faculty Matter Teaching Tip #41: Launching into the new year with purpose and control

Whether you are new to SJSU or a returning faculty member with many years' experience, the sudden arrival of the new semester most likely brings with it a range of emotions. As you prepare for your first class meetings, take a moment of two to think about the items on this list:

Even before you meet your first class, have you thought about your goals for the semester, and have you allocated your time accordingly?

- Where have you allocated time for teaching-related tasks? (actual class time, preparing for class, grading, office hours)?
- Where have you allocated time for your other professional responsibilities and goals?
- Where have you allocated time for your personal goals and needs.
- And are you prepared to adjust your plan, as needed?

Does your syllabus do what you need it to do? If you were a student in the class,

- Would you be able to put together a clear picture of what the class was about?
- Would you have a sense of what your instructor expected you to learn from it?
- Would it be clear to you what, specifically, you were going to be asked to do, and when?
- Would you be able to figure out where you could turn if you encountered any difficulties along the way?

Do you have a plan for what you want to accomplish during the first class meeting?

- How will you introduce yourself? What will you tell students about yourself, and your professional background? What, if anything, do you plan to share about your personal background? (Be very judicious here – you can't un-share...)
- What do you plan to ask them to tell you about themselves, and their backgrounds and aspirations? How, specifically, do you plan to ask them to share this information (e.g., just with you, or with classmates as well)?
- Do you have a plan for how you will tend to the "administrivia", such as wait-lists, add codes and the like? Will you walk the class through your syllabus?
- Do you plan to jump in right away with course content?

And if you have taught this course before, think about how you handled the first day of class on that (those) occasion(s).

- What do you want to do in exactly the same manner?
- What might you want to add, delete, do differently, etc.?

There's nothing particularly profound or novel about this set of questions – but thinking through your answers to them may help you launch into the new semester with a more defined sense of purpose and control.

You can read all previous tips on the [Faculty Matter Tips](#) page of the CFD website. We welcome your thoughts and suggestions for additional FMTT topics!