Elements of a Learning-centered Syllabus

As you begin to design your syllabus – and, more specifically, your learning outcomes, activities, and assessments – here are three questions to keep in mind:

- Is it linked to the life of the learner?
- Is it challenging yet attainable?
- Does it inspire both the learner and the teacher?

Basic Components of a Learning-Centered Syllabus

- **Basic information.** The course name and number, meeting times and location(s), credit hours, and semester.
- **Instructor information.** Office location and hours, appointment scheduling, phone numbers, contact information for teaching or lab assistants.
- **Prerequisites.** Courses, knowledge, or skills students should already have.
- **Required texts and materials.** List of all required textbooks, technology, and other materials (packets, programs, internet access, and so on) with information about editions, volumes, and other details; for difficult-to-find materials, hints on locating copies.
- **Course description.** Summary of what the course covers, with more details than the short catalog descriptions, to give students a more complete picture of what you will (and will not) include.
- **Course purpose.** Explanation of why students should take this course, how it is relevant to them, and how it will help them now and in the future.
- **Course learning outcomes.** List of three to five learning outcomes for the course and department level program—this is what you want the students to really “get” from their experience, the ideas/experiences they’ll remember 5 years from now. Remember, these should be linked to students’ lives and be challenging yet attainable and inspiring.
- **Student learning goals.** A space for students to record their own goals and hopes for the course. Ask students to fill in these goals and refer to them often.
- **Classroom procedures.** Summary of the basic routines and learning activities for the course, how you’ll assess students’ knowledge and skills, what they can expect from you and what you expect from them.
- **Participation.** Explanation of how you expect students to participate in your class, how they should prepare, and how you will assess their participation.
• **Recommended study habits and other tips.** Helpful tips and hints for students about how to get the most out of your course, how to study for the assignments and exams, and other suggestions that will help them excel in your class.

• **Tips on using the syllabus.** Explanation of how students can use the syllabus to best advantage.

• **Grading procedures.** A breakdown of each assignment and exam, what it's worth, how you weight scores, and percentages for each grade level. As with learning outcomes, assessments should be linked to students' lives, challenging yet attainable, and inspiring.

• **Assignment descriptions.** Descriptions and directions for each type of assignment, quiz, exam, and so on, or directions to more detailed directions; this is the information students need to understand the course assessments.

• **Course schedule.** Calendar of class days, dates, topic titles, learning outcomes, assignments, exams, and so on, with an explanation of how you'll handle scheduling changes if necessary.

• **Course policies.** Policy statements and standards you expect the students (and yourself) to meet. These may include standard statements from the University, college, or department.