Educational Psychology and Technology 110: Motivation and Learning Strategies

As a SCP student you are required to take EDPT 110 and you may think, “Why is this class so important?”

We are so glad you asked....

THE MANY BENEFITS OF EDPT 110

- Take better charge of your academic success.
- Enhance your time management strategies.
- Learn why you might procrastinate and how to overcome this obstacle.
- Improve your GPA!
- Get help with your other classes.
- Get an introduction to the fields of Education and Psychology.

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EDPT 110 is the semester course that turns undergraduates into mini-social scientists in search of their own academic weaknesses. Through self-administered tests, trial and error and much introspection, students take a magnifying glass to anemic motivation, persistent procrastination, rampant disorganization and other stumbling blocks to a successful college career. They then research and evaluate the effectiveness strategies for taming these demons.

"My goal is to give students the tools to function more efficiently," said EDPT Professor Dembo, holder of the Stephen Crocker Professorship in Education. "I want to empower them" to become "self-regulated learners." "

"The emphasis up to this point in reform has been on trying to do more for students- to get them better teachers, better curricula, schools with better governance and so forth," Dembo said.

There’s been insufficient attention to the people who are most responsible for their success: students themselves. I want to help them take control of their learning so they can better function in all kinds of environments, even in schools that are less than optimal."

At least at the college level the evidence of the approach's effectiveness is compelling. When compared with a control group of USC freshmen with the same SATs but higher incoming GPAs, the freshmen who took EDPT 110 were earning slightly higher grades by their fourth and fifth semesters. Their retention rate, meanwhile, was comparable to the students with the higher incoming GPAs.

Most students see improvements in eight of 10 categories measured by the Learning and Study Skills Inventory (LSSI), a standardized test that compares a student's study habits with those of other college students across the nation.

"The strongest and most consistent improvements tend to be in time management and reduction in test anxiety," Dembo said. A University of Texas at Austin study has shown that time management is a better predictor of college success than SAT scores.

Armed with their LASSI results, Dembo's students pick another USC course to serve as a "laboratory" for the learning and motivational strategies that they will evaluate. For the rest of the semester, they keep a journal tracking how well those strategies serve them. These reflections later figure into the course's final project: "a self-management study," recapping everything a student has learned about his or her study habits.

In the quest to become better test takers, Dembo's students dip into the latest research on memory and learning. For help in more sophisticated forms of intellectual processing, he teaches them how to assemble material into maps, charts, tables and matrices. Dembo also teaches them a form of note taking where they generate potential test questions from their notes.

Amy Strook, who took the course in 1995, is working on her master's degree at USC while teaching school in Redondo Beach. To this day, when Strook reviews class notes, she jots down questions suggested by the notes in the left-hand margin. To review for tests, Strook merely practices answering those questions.

"It's still one of the most inspiring classes I've had in college," Strook said of EDPT 110. "It gave me a great base."

* Taken from “Rossier Course Helps Students Help Themselves" by Meg Sullivan, University of California Chronicle May 8, 2000