"EXPECTATIONS 101"
THE COURSE NEW FACULTY MUST NOT FAIL!

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ABSTRACT

The old adage *"First Impressions are Everlasting Impressions"* definitely applies to new faculty members especially if they do not have any prior teaching experience. Additionally, new faculty members cannot afford to get off on the wrong foot since reappointment decisions are normally made within a two year timeframe.

"Expectations 101" was designed to initiate open, candid and honest communications between new faculty members and their students. Based on faculty/student integrity and frank upfront dialogue, ***"Expectations 101"*** sets the stage for a *transformational* rather than *transactional* learning experience. The exercise developed for ***"Expectations 101"*** uncovers the "hidden" teaching and learning expectations of students and permits the new faculty member to adjust, *without compromise*, how they will conduct the class.

INTRODUCTION

In order for a new faculty member, particularly one without prior teaching experience, to succeed they must first acknowledge that they too are a student in the classroom. They are a student that is learning and developing as an effective instructor and teacher. Brent and Felder[1] stated, "New faculty members have had to teach themselves how to devise stimulating lectures and rigorous but fair assignments and tests, how to motivate students to want to learn and how to make them active participants in the learning process, and how to help them develop critical problem-solving, communication, and teamwork skills." For a new faculty member the task may seem daunting.

Without realizing or opening acknowledging it, students have an unwritten standard that is expected of each class and instructor. The procedure outlined in ***"Expectations 101"*** will help guide the first time teacher in how to uncover the expectations of students and how to effectively implement changes. This paper discusses a simple yet effective exercise designed to solicit student input regarding their specific teaching expectations of the new faculty member and the conduct of the class. Analysis of student data provides first hand knowledge and crucial "intelligence" for the new faculty member. The results offer a significant *"win-win"* scenario for both the new faculty member and the students. New faculty members share their student learning expectations while gaining invaluable insights necessary to enhance the effectiveness of the course presentation and administration. Students adopt "ownership" for the class since they provided a say into the teaching expectations the new faculty member is honoring as the class is being taught.

CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

No matter how knowledgeable and prepared a new faculty member may be, they will not be an effective instructor if they do not determine and address the specific expectations of the students. It is important to note, that a new faculty member will, most likely, not recognize this need. New first-time instructors may have only their own scholastic experiences to use when structuring their courses and lectures. While they may think they are heading toward their goal of being an effective teacher they may be falling short of the expectations of the students without realizing it. At times new faculty members may even sense they are missing the mark with the students and become frustrated lacking the know-how to correct the situation. The frustration will be sensed by the students and can lead to an unpleasant learning/classroom environment. This scenario often leads students to give instructors failing grades in *Expectations 101*.

As stated by media master Roger Ailes, the first thing that must be done to prepare for public speaking is to evaluate your audience. He states, "Be aware, in advance, of their special interests, expertise, and desires of aspirations, so you can be sure to address them appropriately."[(2)] This fundamental rule of public speaking is equally important in the classroom. An effective engineering professor must keep the audience in mind; must be aware of their scholastic maturity, background, and pertinent areas where the subject matter may be applied.

"To be an effective professor, faculty, especially new faculty, must take the initiative to find ways to establish trust with their students beginning on the very first day of class." [(3)] For the new faculty member, it is imperative a positive classroom dynamic be established, where the class and instructor function together as a team. The problem is often a lack of know-how or understanding of what is expected of the faculty member, not necessarily by the university but, by the students themselves. Ideally, a mentor or senior faculty member should be assigned to the new faculty member so they can be guided through the process.

CONCEPT IMPLEMENTATION

Opening the Lines of Communication

To understand the hidden expectations and to initiate trust, the faculty member must begin open communication with the students. If accomplished, the students will feel "listened to" and in turn become more receptive to what the new professor will be teaching them. The classroom learning environment gradually evolves into one of mutual cooperation, understanding and respect mimicking the ideal conditions associated with being a member of a highly productive team in the corporate world.

The exercise presented in ***"Expectations 101"*** began the communication phase with a student questionnaire (see Appendix A) which asked the students to comment on their positive and negative expectations. For the greatest insight, allow the students' time to take the questionnaire home and reflect on their answers. Regardless of the means of communication the new professor chooses, the manner in which it is presented to the class is critical. The importance of their comments should be stressed to the class. It is recommended the mentor or senior faculty member present the concept; thereby showing support of the new faculty member and, in general, making

it known that the university strives for effective teaching practices. The students will respond with thoughtful and insightful input for the new faculty member.

The initial timing of the questionnaire can vary. If the process begins in the first week of class, it is most likely the responses will be of a general nature; the students have simply not had the time to "evaluate" the plusses and minuses of the course. It is advised the questionnaire be either re-given, or initially given around the third or fourth week of classes. This will insure specific and insightful feedback from the students while still allowing time to implement any needed changes. It also allows new faculty members to become comfortable in the classroom and to learn for themselves some specifics about teaching. As stated in *The Penn State Teacher II*, "The real value of mid-semester feedback is that it opens a dialogue about the processes of learning and teaching. This dialogue allows you to decide systematically where to make certain changes, when they seem warranted making the course and the instruction more effective. Making informed decisions about what to change and what not to change--and explaining your reasons to students--is a big step toward becoming a better teacher."(4)

The initiation of communication should be applied to all classes. Students' needs are honed and fine-tuned with collegiate experience. Seasoned students, namely juniors and seniors, will have different expectations than freshman students. Additionally, students are motivated to learn what they perceive is relevant to their past experiences or future ambitions.(5) And, for example, Civil Engineering Technology (CET) students will have different expectations than Mechanical Engineering Technology (MET) students. This is just one reason it is suggested that each individual class participate in the exercise. Not only can it be stated that the expectations from one class to another are different but, the interaction of the process itself is an essential link in establishing open communication and mutual trust in the classroom.

Analysis of Student Response

In preparation for the next step, the students' expectations should be categorized and tallied. It is at this time that the new faculty member truly learns the students' expectations and, the strengths and weaknesses within the classroom will be revealed. Some reflection time is advised. It is suggested that the new faculty member discuss the results and possible directions with a mentor or senior faculty member prior to review with the students.

Two-way Communication – Open Discussion with the Class

Each student should be given a copy of the questionnaire results. Open candid discussion is needed to truly review the results of the survey. The professor should be open and honest about his/her own expectations and explain the reasons for each. Allow the students to comment on the findings; empower them to brainstorm ways to improve the class and to meet their expectations.

Acting as a facilitator, the instructor should monitor the discussion but retain veto rights. The instructor should be open-minded to the ideas of the students while also considering the educational quality expected of the university. Outrageous suggestions should be courteously vetoed. The instructor will need to draw out the opinions of the quieter students and be certain that the changes being discussed reflect the opinion of the silent majority not just the vocal minority.(6) By listening to the students, and allowing them to have a part in developing the

classroom structure, the faculty member is showing them respect in a way that breaks open the barriers of communication.

The benefits of this process are three fold. 1) The entire process demonstrates to the students the desire of the new faculty member to, not only be an instructor but, to be a caring and effective teacher. 2) The new faculty member has learned what is needed to meet the expectations of his/her students, as well as, specific classroom "*do's and don'ts*." 3) The third and greatest reward of this process is a new classroom dynamic based on teamwork and mutual respect. The students will take partial ownership of the class structure and appreciate the flexibility of the instructor.

Reassessment

The agreed upon changes should be implemented immediately. Any structural/grading changes should be documented in an updated syllabus. The change in the classroom dynamic should be immediate; open communication and mutual respect should prevail.

Reassessment is a necessary step in the process. The instructor should reevaluate the class near the end of the semester; allowing enough time to report on the findings.

CASE STUDY

This case study was conducted in the fall of 2002, at the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown. The instructor was in the first semester of a tenure stream faculty position in MET. Three classes were taught by the new faculty member, Fluid Mechanics – 9:00 AM consisting of Junior MET students, Fluid Mechanics – 10:00 AM made up of Junior CET students, and Machine Design consisting of Senior MET students.

The timing of the survey was important. It was given several weeks into the semester so that the students could be very specific in defining their expectations both from a positive and negative sense. The questionnaires were explained and handed out to each class by the mentoring faculty member on behalf of the new faculty member. The questionnaire was presented in a positive way; students were told of the importance of their input and they were given the weekend to comment. An example survey is shown in Appendix A. On the following Monday, there was a near 100% return with many detailed, and thoughtful suggestions. The students' comments were tallied and complied for class. The results, in their entirety, are given in Appendix B; an abbreviated table of main concerns is shown in Table 1.

The new faculty member first reviewed the results with the mentor. Several interesting points were noted. First, a major comment in all three classes was that the students did not want the instructor to do book questions as classroom examples. Second, nine members of the 10:00 AM fluids class commented that the pace was too fast while none of the 9:00 AM class made a similar comment. By comparing the results it was determined that the 10:00 AM class, made up of CET students, had a different background than the MET students in the 9:00 AM class, as a result, they required additional explanations of the concepts. Third, a major comment made by the Machine Design class was that they liked when the instructor would give examples pertaining to the subject from actual work experience.

TABLE 1 *STUDENT EXPECTATIONS FOR FIRST TIME INSTRUCTORS*	**Fluid Mechanics** (Tally)		**Machine Design** (Tally)	**Total** (Tally)
LECTURE STRUCTURE	**9:00**	**10:00**		
Do examples that are not in the book. Don't teach directly from the book.	7	14	5	26
Gear the lectures to the homework–Give examples like the homework	1	7	3	11
Do not rush to get through the material (Not too much at one time) (Don't rush at end of class)		9	1	10
Do more problems on the board.	3	3	3	9
Clearly explain equations and variables (before homework)	5	1		6
Do give examples and problems that relate in the "real world" – make it interesting			5	5
HOMEWORK				
Review homework the day its due – give soln's that day	5	3	2	10
Review homework problems in class (before going on to new material)	4	1	2	7
Give students a chance to correct homework after going over it in class	6		1	7
Don't assign homework for sections not covered in class.	4	2		6
Give two class periods to do the homework – so there is a chance to ask questions	2		3	5
OTHER				
Make the quizzes and tests like the homework -give students a good idea for what to expect.	1	5	4	10
Be available for office hours – more office hours – be easy to reach	1	1	3	5
Be empathetic toward the students – listen to their comments – be understanding	1	1	1	3

Next copies of the results were distributed to the students. The instructor reviewed all of the top comments with the students. For items such as, "do examples that are not in the book", the instructor assured the class that changes would be implemented immediately. Next, the students were encouraged to discuss possible changes in course structure (i.e.: frequency of homework collection). The instructor oversaw the brainstorming and chose a few appropriate solutions for a classroom vote.

The secondary outcome of the brainstorming sessions, in each class, was exciting. The students seemed to gain new respect for the instructor, in spite of being a first time teacher. The entire classroom dynamic changed as evidenced by an increase in discussions and class participation. The instructor was better able to assess if the class was struggling with subjects and could make needed adjustments. There was an increase of students visiting during office hours; proof that a "connection" was being formed between the instructor and the students. A true atmosphere of open communication prevailed. At times when the first time teacher was struggling to explain complex topics, the class was empathetic and not critical if questions had to be answered during the following class.

A specific example of an implemented change in class structure resulting from open discussion was the frequency that the homework was being collected and graded. While the instructor insisted on collecting homework, the frequency was changed from three times a week, to once a week. In addition, it was decided that the number of problems being graded would be reduced. An advantage that the students saw with the revised homework policy was the introduction of homework problems being done on the board. At the beginning of each class, the instructor would work out a homework problem of the students' choice. It was agreed that the problems worked on the board would not be one of the problems later graded. The students appreciated the

leniency and the instructor was satisfied in knowing that all of the homework was still being completed. In addition, the reduction in time spent grading allowed for a much needed increase in lecture preparation time for the new faculty member.

Reassessment Results

Several weeks before the end of the semester, the instructor again presented the class with a questionnaire. See Appendix C. The number of students responding decreased but the comments were encouraging. A total of 26 students responded; 25 stated that their expectations had been met. One student failed to circle either yes or no. See **A**ppendix D for the complete results, an abbreviated table of major concerns is listed in Table 2.

TABLE 2 - REASSESSMENT ***STUDENT EXPECTATIONS FOR FIRST TIME INSTRUCTORS***	**Fluids Mechanics** (Tally)		**Machine** (Tally)	**Total** (Tally)
QUESTION 1: HAVE YOUR EXPECTATIONS BEEN MET?	**9:00**	**10:00**		
Yes	6	12	7	25
No	0	0	0	0
Not answered	1	0	0	1
COMMENTS TO QUESTION 1				
Examples in class are excellent – good that the examples are not the same as in the book – not teaching straight from book is good	3	3	5	11
Tests and quizzes are fair – similar to homework – challenging but I can do so long as I do the homework	3	3	2	8
Good Job – Keep up the good work – I'm getting more from this class than any other		4	4	8
Lectures are much better – explanations are better	1		3	4
Willingness to compromise with students is commendable – I like the flexibility with the lesson plan/homework			2	2
I like that the home work is collected weekly instead of nightly		1	1	2
Homework is good in amount and context	2			2
Teacher is more confident	2			2
Ability to keep class at pace students can keep up with is great	1	1		2
QUESTION 2: HAVE YOU ANY OTHER SUGGESTIONS?				
Scrap BFSAAC – (Homework problem structure)	1	6		7
Just give a small amount of lecture then do an example and explain as you go. – more examples less theory	1	1		2
Give solutions the day after they are assigned – give soln's sooner	1	1		2

Eleven of the students stated that they were now pleased with the examples being presented in class, which was a major concern on the first questionnaire. In general, the students felt the tests and quizzes were fair, the lectures had improved and they liked the way homework was being handled.

Many of the comments were specific to the effort of the instructor. For example, the students appreciated the willingness to compromise with the students and to be flexible with the initial lesson plans/homework, they commented that the faculty member seemed more confident, and quite a number of students offered encouraging comments such as, "keep up the good work" and "good job". Additional suggestions for improvement were also noted, however, with the exception of the professors' problem format, they were minor.

CONCLUSIONS

The simple yet effective exercise described in ***"Expectations 101"*** was designed to open the lines of communication between students and new faculty members, as well as to solicit specific student input regarding their teaching expectations and the administration of the class. The rewards of the exercise are essential for a quick integration into effective teaching for new faculty members.

The guidance and involvement of a senior faculty member (mentor) throughout the exercise is critical to the process and is highly recommended. It permits the new faculty member to benefit from years of experience as well as shows the students that the university has a standard of learning.

The benefits of this process are three fold. 1) The entire process demonstrates to the students the desire of the new faculty member to, not only be an instructor but, to be a caring and effective teacher. 2) The new faculty member has learned what is needed to meet the expectations of his/her students, as well as, specific classroom "*do's and don'ts*." 3) The third and greatest reward of this process is a new classroom dynamic based on teamwork and mutual respect. The students will take partial ownership of the class structure and appreciate the flexibility of the instructor.

REFERENCES

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APPENDIX A – INITIAL QUESTIONNAIRE

STUDENT'S EXPECTATIONS FOR A NEW FACULTY MEMBER

1. Please list those positive expectations you have for a new faculty member that would greatly enhance your learning while helping the new faculty member avoid some "pitfalls" limiting their teaching effectiveness.

2. Please specifically list those "pitfalls" you were thinking about above so the new faculty member clearly understands those thing they should ***NOT*** do resulting in a negative teaching and learning experience for both the students and the faculty member.

APPENDIX B

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS FOR FIRST TIME INSTRUCTORS ***Initial Questionnaire Results***	**Fluids Mechanics** (Tally)		**Machine Design** (Tally)	**Total** (Tally)
LECTURE STRUCTURE	**9:00**	**10:00**		
Do examples that are not in the book. Don't teach directly from the book. (Don't be afraid of examples)	7	14	5	26
Gear the lectures to the homework–Give examples like the homework	1	7	3	11
Do not rush to get through the material (Not too much at one time) (Don't rush at end of class)		9	1	10
Do more problems on the board.	3	3	3	9
Clearly explain equations and variables (before homework)	5	1		6
Do give examples and problems that relate in the "real world" – make it interesting			5	5
Make sure to copy items to board correctly		4		4
Do not do equation deviations or a lot of theory	2		1	3
Do not blow through material when the class is confused.	2			2
Incorporate a team concept for learning		1		1
More pictures		1		1
Spend class time on questions and examples –let students read the theory in book			1	1
Allow more student/teacher interaction in class – make the students think about the subject before introducing it.			1	1
HOMEWORK				
Review homework the day its due – give soln's that day	5	3	2	10
Review homework problems in class (before going on to new material)	4	1	2	7
Give students a chance to correct homework after going over it in class	6		1	7
Don't assign homework for sections not covered in class.	4	2		6
Give two class periods to do the homework – so there is a chance to ask questions	2		3	5
Promptly return homework	2	2		4
Do collect homework each time		1	2	3
Do give homework solutions	1	1		2
Eliminate problem structure requirements	1	1		2
Know the homework problems inside and out.	1		1	2
Don't grade homework for correctness – only for effort.	1		1	2
If giving solutions to homework - do not review in class			1	1
Do not assign homework with out giving the answers	1			1
Do not assign problems beyond the realm of the students knowledge			1	1
OTHER				
Make the quizzes and tests like the homework-don't be tricky on exam-give students a good idea for what to expect.	1	5	4	10
Be available for office hours – more office hours – be easy to reach	1	1	3	5
Be empathetic toward the students – listen to their comments – be understanding	1	1	1	3
Offer solutions to extra problems – give handout of worked problems		2		2
Be decisive			1	1
Knowledgeable on the subject being taught			1	1
Give partial credit on tests ie: "displayed process knowledge"			1	1
Give open book tests and quizzes	1			1
Provide a review session before exams			1	1

APPENDIX C

REASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

STUDENT'S EXPECTATIONS FOR A NEW FACULTY MEMBER

A number of weeks ago you were asked to list your positive expectations for a new faculty member that would enhance your learning effectiveness and the negative "pitfalls" to be avoided. Since that time, many of the suggestions the class had given have been implemented. For the sake of continuous improvement, your input is again needed.

1. Have your expectations been met. Please explain.

2. Have you any other suggestions or recommendations to make?

APPENDIX D

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS FOR FIRST TIME INSTRUCTORS ***Reassessment Survey Results***	**Fluids Mechanics** (Tally)		**Machine Design** (Tally)	**Total** (Tally)
QUESTION 1: HAVE YOUR EXPECTATIONS BEEN MET?	**9:00**	**10:00**		
Yes	6	12	7	25
No	0	0	0	0
Not answered	1	0	0	1
COMMENTS TO QUESTION 1				
Examples in class are excellent – good that the examples are not the same as in the book – not teaching straight from book is good	3	3	5	11
Tests and quizzes are fair – similar to homework – challenging but I can do so long as I do the homework	3	3	2	8
Good Job – Keep up the good work – I'm getting more from this class than any other		4	4	8
Lectures are much better – explanations are better	1		3	4
Problem sessions were a great idea!		2		2
Willingness to compromise with students is commendable – I like the flexibility with the lesson plan/homework			2	2
I like that the home work is collected weekly instead of nightly		1	1	2
Homework is good in amount and context	2			2
Teacher is more confident	2			2
Ability to keep class at pace students can keep up with is great	1	1		2
Homework and lecture are lined up with each other	1			1
Need to get back to students with answers to questions at the next class	1			1
Book is confusing but I am still learning	1			1
Too much lecturing don't take so much from the book	1			1
The teacher seems more available for extra help		1		1
Material seems more interesting.		1		1
Challenged by the homework but going over it in class helps it to make sense		1		1
I like the real life examples			1	1
I like that you involve the class by asking questions			1	1
QUESTION 2: HAVE YOU ANY OTHER SUGGESTIONS?				
Scrap BFSAAC – (Homework problem structure)	1	6		7
Just give a small amount of lecture then do an example and explain as you go. – more examples less theory	1	1		2
Give solutions the day after they are assigned – give soln's sooner	1	1		2
Go over more homework	2			2
The example problems are more important than rushing through the notes	1	1		2
Give more examples not from the book		2		2
When doing in-class problems just show assumptions and analysis			2	2
I liked the more extensive review that you did before the quiz			2	2
Don't have cumulative finals.	1			1
Make the second exam the same length as the first and give it the week before finals.	1			1
Revamp the lab	1			1
Tests are challenging – somewhat good but somewhat bad		1		1
Get a different book		1		1
Have a study session before each quiz and exam		1		1
Pay a little more attention to the size of writing on the blackboard			1	1