



A Checklist for Building Community

Effective teaching involves the deliberate cultivation of a learning environment where all students feel valued and supported in their learning. One way to think about this is through the intentional creation of community – where students and instructors are committed to a shared learning goal, and all experience a sense of belonging and commonality of interest.

Review this list of strategies and make note of items you might try, next time you teach.

Strategy	I've done this	I'd like to try this	Not right now
Directly assign tasks that involve students getting to know each other (e.g., the Fast Friends protocol , create an interactive response map).			
Invite students to share a picture or story of a pet, favorite location, meaningful object, or favorite quote. Create a slideshow from their contributions and play it on loop as students are arriving to class.			
Use a survey to ask your students to describe what makes them unique, their past coursework, interests, and other details that might help you get to know them. Incorporate what you learn about them into your content delivery. Look for ways to have them share their unique perspective with other students.			
Have students create a profile with a bio and picture, in the discussion board. Invite them to comment on others' profiles with points of interest or intersection.			
Have students create name tents so that you and their peers can use their names.			
Ask students to write down their personal learning goals for the course and compare them to the course objectives. Invite them to share their responses in small groups. Debrief with the whole class.			
Work with students to create a list of shared expectations and norms for the class. Use this to create a community agreement with shared ownership.			
Set the expectation early on that all students hold themselves accountable to participate in some capacity during discussions. Emphasizes to students that their contributions carry weight and remain vital to shaping class discussions.			
When students attend office hours, ask them about their other classes.			

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Host informal "work time" sessions.			
Invite students to attend office hours in groups.			
Encourage or require students to visit office hours early in the term and use that time to ask about their interests and experiences with course material.			
Create study groups by students' schedules/time zone.			
Create opportunities for students to share their work with each other.			
Start class with a well-being check-in (e.g., invite students to share a success or challenge they recently experienced, and share your own as well).			
Invite students to share their favorite campus resources with the class.			
Create small groups of students to interact frequently.			
Use Perusall so that students can interact with each other when completing reading for the course. (side-note: UGA has a license for this tool)			
After a group assignment or project, ask students to identify the contributions their peers made to their work and learning.			
Create an assignment asking students to give each other feedback about their strengths.			
Model what it sounds like to make connections between contributions or to build on another individual's ideas. Underscore how students' ideas intersect.			
Incorporate points students make into instruction and activities; embrace student questions, curiosity, and interests, and use them to guide the curriculum			
Invite student-to-student dialogue so students can build on one another's ideas. When a student presents an interesting yet underdeveloped idea, encourage others in the class to help push that idea forward.			

SOURCES

This list was adapted from the following resources:

- Center for Teaching Innovation, Cornell University. [Building Community and Belonging](#).
- Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence & Educational Innovation, Carnegie Mellon. [Concrete Strategies for Building Community](#).
- Graduate School of Education, Harvard University. [Building Community](#).

CREATIVE COMMONS

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