

DIVERSITY, INCLUSION & ACCESS

mines.edu/diversity

Inclusive Classroom

Knowing students' names matters

The learning of the names of their fellow classmates has deep value for students in a class. After all, they are spending 15 weeks together with the expectation they will talk to each other about important topics, collaborate, critique, and take risks. Not many of us would want to do these things in a roomful of strangers.

Investing time to learn one another's name pays dividends throughout the semester by creating a better environment for learning. Students show greater willingness to help each other, act with more consideration to each other, and spend more time together before, after, and outside of class (Davidson, 2014).

Group discussion:

- Share strategies you use to learn student names.
- Share the effect learning names has on classroom dynamic.
- Are you intentional about introducing your preferred name and/or title to your class? Why is this important?

Tips:

- In the beginning, continually remind students to introduce themselves by their name before they make a statement in class. Also encourage students to introduce themselves to their peers as soon as they start a small group activity.
- Create name tents with students' preferred name and pronouns on both sides. Encourage students to use their classmates' names in large and small group discussions (e.g., "to build on what *Sam* just said," instead of "to build on what *they* just said."). This makes students feel heard.
- Use fun word associations. This method of "anchoring" students' name with something unique can help students establish a system for remembering other students.
 - Sample ice breaker: Give students :30 to think of a food item that matches the first letter of their first name (e.g., Bacon Billy). Student 1 introduces themselves to the class (e.g., "Hi, I'm Bacon Billy). Student 2 recalls the name of Student 1,

and adds their name to the list (e.g., “Bacon Billy, and I’m Strawberry Sarah). Student 3 recalls the names of Students 1 and 2 and adds their name (e.g., Bacon Billy, Strawberry Sarah, and I’m Jello Jesus). Repeat pattern until all names are announced. Jump in and play as their professor, too! *To help with name associations, a single food item can only be used once per student.* We bet students will remember “Toast Tanya, Pickle Peter, and NutterButter Natalia” all semester.

References:

“20 Tips for Learning Students’ Names,” *OSU University Center for the Advancement of Teaching*, <https://ucat.osu.edu/bookshelf/teaching-topics/shaping-a-positive-learning-environment/20-tips-learning-student-names/>

Davidson, Judith. “Activities for Helping Students Learn One Another's Names,” *Faculty Focus*, January 24, 2014, <https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/teaching-and-learning/activities-helping-students-learn-one-anothers-name/>