FOSTERING ACADEMIC TENACITY:
OFFICE HOURS

A sense of belonging has been positively associated with higher levels of drive, motivation, engagement and academic self-efficacy in post-secondary students (Freeman et al. 2007). Positive out-of-class interactions with instructors have shown benefit to sense of belonging, student wellbeing, and academic achievement (Bowman, 2010; Glass et al., 2015; O'Keeffe, 2013).

PLAN

Creating opportunities for connection through office hours can take many forms.

- What is the goal of office hours in your course and how do students know it?
- How can you design your office hours to meet those goals?

IMPLEMENT

When implementing this strategy, consider spaces, timing and content as different areas of your office hours that you can adapt.

- Are there certain times in the course that make sense for different types of office hours?
- What kinds of activities can you engage with during office hours to meet these goals?

REFLECT

As you try this strategy, make time to reflect on your practice.

- How has the strategy been working for you?
- How has it been working for your students?
- What might you try next?

PLAN

As you consider how you would like to offer office hours in your course explore different ways to engage with this strategy.

WHAT

- What would you like students to take away from attending office hours?
  - Is there a time for questions, informal connection, discussion around their goals, or study strategies?
- What kinds of connection would you like to facilitate?
  - With you?
  - With the TA(s)?
  - With each other?

WHEN

- Are there certain points across the term that are appropriate for certain kinds of office hours?
- How frequent are office hours offered?
- Are the office hours offered at consistent or rotating times?
- Will students all arrive at the same time, or are the sessions within a drop-in time range?

WHERE

When choosing a space consider:

- Is the space accessible?
- What is the capacity of the space?
- Do you need permission to use the space?
- How far is the space from the regular classroom?
- How familiar are students with the space?
- What is the level of noise in the space at different times of day?
- How connected is the space to the academic environment?
  - Spaces such as your office or meeting rooms in your department's building may have a strong academic connection.
  - Spaces where students already gather, such as a student lounge, cafe, or library may have a less formal atmosphere.
- What furniture is available in the space?
- Explore informal learning spaces at UBC.

IMPLEMENT

Implementing a new approach for the first time is an experiment. At any point in the term there are creative ways to promote connection in office hours, for example: offering or inviting students to bring food (see Bagels with Ben) or introducing a low stakes activity that is new for the group (see knitting with Neil).

Before the Term Begins

Include a visit to office hours as part of the curriculum

- When designing your course, incorporate a visit to office hours as part of the regular course assignments. For example:
  - Assigning participation marks for attendance.
  - This visit could be included without calling it office hours in name by including a low stakes oral assignment (i.e., a discussion about a topic of interest or project proposal).

Beginning of the Term

Invite students to office hours

- This invitation can be extended in many ways (i.e., during lecture time, on the course syllabus, as a Canvas announcement).
- In your invitation, include what students can expect:
  - Where & when will they take place?
  - Will they be connecting with the instructor, the TA(s), each other?
  - What kind of questions might they bring?
  - What can they expect to leave with?

Throughout the Term

Engage students in office hour activities that go beyond the course content

- Check-in questions can be related to course material, or the time of the year. The intention is for students to learn something new about their instructor, TA or each other. The responses can be shared in pairs or across the group - they may even spark a lively conversation!
- Consider using this time to develop study skills and strategies (i.e., pre/post midterm advice, tips and tricks for short answer exam questions.)

REFLECT

As you consider how this strategy is working for you and your students, consider gathering feedback to inform what you might try next.

FEEDBACK

How are students engaging with the activities?

Reviewing responses:

- Submitted reflections.

Asking students:

- How many times did you attend office hours this term?
  - You can also differentiate by different types of office hours.
- What opportunities did you have throughout the course that helped you build relationships with your peers?
- How do you think this course could have helped you build relationships with other students?

How are students developing academic tenacity?

Academic Tenacity

- Academic Buoyancy (Martin & Marsh, 2008)

Social Belonging

- Undergraduate Experience Survey - Belonging subscale (UBC, 2018)

Perceptions of the Learning Environment

- Survey on Well-being in Learning Environments (Zandvliet et al., 2019)

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