

Retention Strategies That Have Been Successful for MVCC Faculty

Student Success and Retention Are One in the Same



This document provides a collection of retention strategies submitted by your Moraine Valley colleagues starting in 2003. It is our hope to continue to collect and disseminate strategies that are used by our faculty on a daily basis both inside and outside the classroom as they have such a positive impact on our students and their level of success.

We encourage you to submit any new or existing student success strategies and ideas that you feel can help student retention and engagement by going to the Moraine Valley Student Success and Retention Web site at:
www.morainevalley.edu/retention.

Contributor: Brenda Ammeraal

- Since we study different cultures, I have students sign in using different alphabets. The first session they are given a hieroglyphic alphabet and have to draw their names using top to bottom picture letters, the second session we move on to a handout on the Greek alphabet and they sign in using Greek, etc.

Contributor: Krista Appelquist

- Relationships. If a student feels connected to her instructors AND to other students, they will be more motivated to thrive in this environment.

Contributor: Marcia Agema

- At the beginning of the semester, I ask students to fill out a class information card giving me their cell telephone numbers, e-mail addresses, and home telephone numbers. (Often, the telephone number on the class list is different than the 'real' phone numbers.) I explain that the information is used so I can contact them if class is cancelled or they're absent. If someone is absent two days in a row, I can call or e-mail them. They appreciate the contact and we usually work out the problem. However, I am careful not to infringe on their privacy. When I leave a message, it's just asking them to call me. I don't give a reason for the call or say there is a problem. Students are welcome to come to any other classes I teach (it's in the course outline) and sit in if they are absent.

Contributor: Carol Antosz

- I have found that saying "hi" is sometimes all it takes to reach a student. Establishing good rapport and an open line of communication to build student trust is essential. Students gain their trust because they remember the person who took the time to reach out. Many students remember this when they need help or just need someone to talk to for a few minutes. Students now stop me to say "hi". This in turn, gives me the opportunity to ask how he or she is and how classes are coming along. Students need to know and understand that we are here to help and should not be afraid to ask for it. What an awesome feeling it is to know I have reached a student when he or she has tracked me down by appearing at my desk looking for help.

Contributor: David Baitman

- In my College 101 class, I utilize the "games" concept to invigorate interest and participation. I was introduced to the "games" concept at a faculty seminar last fall. Students are divided into teams (usually four to a team) and compete against each other answering relevant questions from the assigned readings and chapters. I have found that students are keenly aware of their team's performance and competition is fierce, i.e., they want to win. I notice that student team members motivate other members of the team to excel and to win. Sometimes when the class period is over and the games must end, they don't want to leave, because their team is only a few points behind the competition. Extra points are awarded to the team scoring the highest points for the contest.

- In my CRJ 207 class, for examinations, rather than give (30) multiple choice questions, I include (60) multiple choice questions on the exam and then link two questions for each of the (30) problems that must be recorded on the test answer sheet. This allows the student to compare the most appropriate answers for each question and eliminate other responses. Each of the two questions that are paired together have the same letter answer (and the instructions indicate such) so that the student may narrow the choices and arrive at the correct answer. In this manner, I am able to test twice the material and allow the student the opportunity to score well by comparing the problems and eliminating the incorrect responses.
- On my exams (multiple choice) I indicate that certain pairs of questions have the same letter answer. I do this for some of the more difficult questions and it allows the student to "narrow" the search for the correct response. Grades have improved and students don't seem as stressed before exams. A "kinder, gentler method of learning."

Contributor: Sandra Beauchamp

- In my COM-101, COM-102, and American Literature courses I frequently use the following techniques to engage my students:
 - Collaborative learning; give groups questions to guide their responses and allow them to report their discussion to the entire class.
 - Strive to create a "community of learners"; students share e-mail addresses and sometimes phone numbers to keep in touch outside of class.
 - Students may access a web page where they are able to continue class discussions online.
 - Hold individual meetings with students throughout the semester; this seems to be one of the most effective means of meeting a student's individual needs and academic goals.

Contributor: Philip Bierdz

- We regularly bring students in technology courses on tours of the computer rooms so they can not only learn about the technology that runs the college, but also get to better understand their career choice and talk to someone in the field. I think this helps students see that their success is a college wide effort. Everyone is in there working on their behalf.

Contributor: Tiffany Bohm

- Upon the initial advising and selection of classes, I try to learn more about our new international students. For example, what are their long term goals? What university do they want to transfer to? In this semester, I learned that we have a student who wants to attend Cornell University for architecture and a student who ultimately, wants to complete a law degree at Harvard. Without taking the time with these two students, I would not have learned this information to advise them in their course selection appropriately.

I think that student persistence can be encouraged through open communication with our students. Specifically, in International Affairs, we need to pay particular attention to first semester students who experience culture shock & homesickness that may result in lower grades. We need to be able to communicate coping mechanisms as well as be the student's cheerleader in their integration into American education system.

Contributor: Gena Bradford

- Every student that I encounter is greeted with a warm smile and greeting. I truly believe that once a student is made comfortable then he/she is free to learn. All students should be treated with respect and courtesy, and remember to never judge a book by its cover.

Contributor: Anna Coco

- Joining with the student on the way to my office is key to building trust with them. I will introduce myself and engage in "small talk" with them before our appointment officially begins. This act seems to increase their comfort level and willingness to work with me. I will also ask them if I am pronouncing their name correctly and invite them to correct me if I do not. I also try and incorporate what we have learned in various staff development activities regarding different cultural practices. Students seem to appreciate the effort. Also, one of the last actions I take is to hand out my business card and explain I am available to help with anything in the future.

First, early intervention with students is so important. Often the students who are experiencing difficulties with their academics do not know about all the resources at MVCC (counseling, tutoring, the writing center). Marketing these resources in COL 101, more than we do, may help. Also, helping a student create a semester schedule that fits their lifestyle is also key to their success. A schedule that provides too demanding will erode their self-esteem ultimately leading to a student leaving MVCC for some years. Finally, encouragement and celebration of what the student does right (instead of solely focusing on how they can improve) can lead to a feeling of connectedness and accomplishment.

Contributor: George Concaildi

- I teach developmental math and they are a challenge to keep engaged in the topics. I have found that real world applications as projects integrated into the lecture/lab provides a basis for retention and learning. There are three projects for my classes and they are addressed in small groups. These are simple projects such as design the floor plan for a house and computer the square footage. This gives them experience in finding areas of geometric figures. They all receive credit for their projects and they seem to have fun in the activity.

Contributor: Valerie K. Cordes

- In teaching psychology, I like to help students make connections between what we are discussing from the text to current, real world issues as much as possible. To aid in doing this, I like to bring in current news articles from various sources which discuss a subject mentioned in class. Whether it be about politics, a social trend, or a new health study, students seem to come alive and understand concepts better when they can relate them to the outside world. I also like to take classes to the MVCC library to show them how to locate popular and research-based articles.

Contributor: Jane Corradetti

- I like to give quick 5 or 10 point buddy quizzes at the beginning of the class period. These cannot be made up even if a student comes in late. Students are randomly placed with a "buddy", and they are able to work together on the quiz. It is a good way to review the information learned in the previous class, and it encourages students to attend and arrive to class on time.
- I am also a firm believer in calling students by name so they are aware that I know who they are and whether or not they are in class. I also maintain attendance records.
- I arrive early and stay after class so students know when they can seek assistance. I also make copies of our tutor schedule and distribute to all students so they are fully aware of when the tutors are available to assist them.
- Students have some types of evaluation every time we meet. Late assignments will be accepted up to one week past the due date and receive only half credit. Late assignments will not be accepted after one week past the due date.

Contributor: Erika Deiters

- I definitely take attendance almost everyday; however, I don't have a strict attendance policy (unless the class only meets once a week or for less than fifteen weeks). I know the students' first names and call on them for participation in classroom discussion. As far as engaging the students, I try to keep the classes different – some discussion, very little lecture, a variety of writing exercises, a variety of readings, student presentations, group work, creative writing, film viewing, working in the computer lab, connecting real world issues/experiences to whatever we're working on in class. It's also important that I make myself available outside of class. If students feel frustrated, I want them to be able to come talk to me or email me before they freak out and drop the class.

Recently, in my poetry writing class, I asked my students to create a poetry magazine. They write the poems, they design the magazine, they design the cover, they write biographies, and they write an introduction. They also evaluate each other and present the magazine to the public (the MVCC library). I hope the project gives them a sense of commitment to the course and to each other. It's a major group project. Some have admitted to hating it because there have been a couple minor arguments because they're a little stressed out about deadlines.

Contributor: Ed Devine

- Treat each individual with respect
- Learn name of each student
- Call each student by name
- Take daily attendance
- Evaluate each lab or in-class activity
- Collect written summary questions or notes on videos (I call it video lab)
- Individual grade consultation after midterm, before drop date.
- Standard of evaluation and grading in syllabus
- Daily response to phone or email messages
- Work with student support services for special-needs students.

Contributor: Yolanda Flores

- Have a positive and friendly attitude when asking the student "Can I help you" plus really follow the helping process instead of redirecting them very quickly.

Contributor: Bill Finn

- The #1 strategy I use in teaching or coaching is PERSONAL attention. I mean serious one on one, where I try to get to know something about each student so I can nurture a rapport, in and out of the classroom. It is a lot of work, but by the end of the first 3 weeks or so I do know everyone's name, and a little bit about them. They now feel connected and will be less apt to miss class because I PERSONALLY know them and they will be missed. Students at a commuter college need to feel part of the school more than anywhere else. I think that if they can get to know the faculty they will feel like they are a part of our community.

Contributor: Dawn Fry

- When I am making my way around campus, I often stop and chat briefly with students that I've met either in new student orientation or in the advising department. I ask them how things are going and if they need any further help, I always wish them luck and encourage them to use MVCC resources when they have questions or issues for class planning. They seem happy to know that I remember them and enjoy the direction I can provide outside of the formal environment we have met previously. I think this friendly interaction helps them to see they just are not just some unknown face taking classes, that we care about their success at MVCC.

Contributor: Ashley Fuhri

- As the voice of the students it is imperative that I know if the students have questions or concerns pertaining to the campus. Assuring the students and letting them know my door is always open is one of the ways I keep the lines of communication open. I also talk to students to encourage them to get involved with events on campus, join a club and or organization. As a student being encouraged to show my talents and skills game me a sense of freedom. I feel the best way to help students is to ask them how they are coming along in their classes, work (if they have a job), and if they are involved with clubs and organizations. Many students do not like to approach the administration so having a student voice to turn to helps bring down the barriers and opens doors. It is also nice to have someone you can relate to and talk with; what better way than with a fellow student.

Contributor: Chuck Geraci

- Too often in relation to the career fields such as Emergency Medical Services (EMS), instructors make the mistake of assuming the students know more than they actually do. The instructor must not assume that the students are already familiar with medical terms, equipment, or procedures. In most cases, the reason why they are taking the introductory course is because they know nothing. I inform the students that the course will begin with the very basics pertaining to both cognitive learning and practical (hands on) skills. I explain to them, "In order for you to get the most from your

education, it must be assumed that you know nothing at the start of the course. It is to your advantage if you happen to already have some experience." This approach helps students achieve their goals and encourages them to regularly attend classes.

Contributor: Sandra Gibbons

- *Organization on the teacher's part.* Students need to know what they are required to complete and when it is due.
- *Fast feedback on grades.* I have all of my classes using the blackboard system so they have access to their grades. This way they can take an exam on a Thursday and see their grade before the next class following Tuesday.
- *Assignments that give the student freedom to express their opinion.* I have students post responses to my discussion board topics. These topics have no right or wrong answer but do pertain to topics covered in class. For example we are learning about population biology as part of the ecology unit. I will post a question that asks students to discuss their views on the human populations grown and China's restrictions on family size.
- *I don't take attendance,* but we do have labs almost every class meeting that are worth points. You can't make them up if absent so this keeps the students motivated to come to class.
- Maybe this point is the most important. *Maintain contact with our students* through email and encourage them to use this tool. I never had students come to my office hour but they will email with questions. I can help students now that just can't or won't come to an office hour.

Contributor: Pam Goodman

- I have an assignment which requires my students to find someone like themselves who has succeeded in chemistry. My students appreciate having this role model to encourage them in their studies. It is important to know that someone from a situation very similar to their own "made it." This knowledge lasts throughout their studies at MVCC and carries over for the rest of their lives.

Contributor: Mary K. Hamann

- I teach the HIM introductory class for many who are looking to become coders, transcriptionists and record techs. My strategy is used by many I am sure. Our class is a lab class with many practical application assignments. The students come from different work backgrounds. Some assignments are easy for those who have worked in healthcare and mind boggling for those with no experience. I encourage the students to help each other and, of course, I am roaming the room answering questions. I have noticed that groups are formed and all help each other. The atmosphere created is respect and a sense of ease that all will be well. No one will be left behind. Mix adult learners with the young. They can learn from each other.

Contributor: Amy Hansen

- I learn my students' names as quickly as possible so they feel like they belong in the class and are not just numbers.

Contributor: Nancy Hessler

- I think the most important thing, other than constant encouragement to our students to help them believe in themselves, is to be very honest about the expectations of college level work. The students that I have had do not seem to understand or, often, do not possess the skills in written and oral expression, planning their time, and commitment in terms of individual study effort outside of the classroom. It is most unfortunate that they have not been introduced to and asked to practice these skills long before they reach college, for this creates a very difficult hurdle as they try both to acquire the necessary basic skills and to master more advanced material. Perhaps better partnerships with area high schools and even grade schools to foster higher standards and greater emphasis in these areas will help them.

Contributor: Anne Jachim

- Students are included in an email list and sent on-going resource information pertaining to specific interests and/or areas of difficulty. In addition, they can send questions, comments, and concerns at any time in a non-threatening environment.
- Research projects are selected by the students area of interest.
- Students are selected to facilitate team projects and peer-to-peer workshops enabling them to demonstrate their knowledge and skills on their own terms.
- Various lectures are videotaped; this enables students to review information at their own pace
- Labs are taped as a mechanism to evaluate student performance

Contributor: Ann Koranda

- Involvement is the key to retaining music students. I encourage all of my private students and music students to continue on with their lessons, learn another instrument, or study music more in depth with a theory or music history class. They are also encouraged to attend and participate in performances such as the student recitals and concerts. I also encourage students to become ensemble participants themselves (such as choir, band or a chamber ensemble). Music making is even more enjoyable when you experience it with others!

Contributor: Janet Kotash

- I sense current typical MVCC students lack confidence in themselves when challenged to write and to think critically at collegiate standards. I find that my coaching their intellectual perseverance might be most effective when strategically timed; the challenge for me is to discover the precise moment when each student is open to developing their intellectual self-confidence. I continue to devote myself to rising to this challenge.
- At the onset of each chapter, students reflect on facts they already know about the topic, and then are instructed to compose six questions about the topic they are interested in knowing. Their questions provide the outline for subsequent, student centered, discussions.

- To accommodate under-prepared students, self-assessment during reading is performed on a regular basis in class, followed by group reports, presented orally, to the entire class.
- Due to lack of motivation among students and whining complaints about homework, I have decided to cancel my policy of written homework involving critical analysis of text chapters; my students either cannot read, or they choose not to read, outside of class.

Contributor: Larry Langellier

- I utilize the Blackboard Discussion Board in all my online and on-campus sections. Students are required to make three posts per week. This accomplishes a number of good things: students connect with one another more quickly than they do otherwise, in our once-a-week format students aren't "off on their own" all week waiting for the next class session, I can more rapidly identify issues individuals are struggling with and ones the entire group might be having. The end result is students are more engaged and they don't slip through the cracks on me.
- I have students work in groups for hands-on, in-class labs. The experience helps seem to deepen their understanding and also make them feel more part of what's going on.
- I assign fun/personally meaningful Midterm and Final Projects. This semester I had all of my Visual Basic II & III students implement a word, strategy, dice, or card game of their choice. They will enhance their midterm solutions for the Final Project. Thank
- Our department has been able to provide tutors for most of our programming courses. We have coverage during most evening and weekend hours and even most afternoons. I believe this has helped us retain 10-20% that we would otherwise lose.
- I require two to three student presentations per semester. One of those is typically a presentation based on research they had to perform on a technology topic while the others are presenting their Projects to the class.

IMS Strategies Identified by Larry Langellier

- Each semester the IMS department designates one week as a "Recruitment Blitz Week". During that week (usually the week before registration begins for the next semester) we have instructors in all of our courses do three things: give an overview of department degrees and certificates, highlight the courses that would be logical next steps from the one they are currently enrolled in, and ask everyone to participate in an online survey that tells us what degrees/certificates they are seeking, what courses they've taken, and what courses they plan to take. We also collect personal contact information (address, phone number, email address).
- The results of the online survey are collected in a database. We are able to use the information in this database for a number of purposes – among them; directly contact students who've indicated an interest in a course that doesn't have enough enrollment to run, doing some data analysis to find student who've indicated an interest in a course but haven't enrolled, and collecting students directly regarding new course offerings if they have already taken the prerequisite(s).

Contributor: Donna Lauritzen

- Expect success! Students will do what is expected of them. If we expect our students to succeed, most often they will, regardless of obstacles in their way. If we believe in our students, and we set the standard at a higher level – but one they can achieve - they will begin to believe in themselves. Once they believe in themselves, they can achieve anything they desire. On the other hand, if we set the standard too low, or if we don't expect much of our students, they won't expect much from themselves; they

won't be motivated. We all need someone to believe in us, and believe we can achieve great things!

Contributor: Sandy Leonard

- One of the most important things to remember is to try to help a student the first time they call with a question or concern. We've all experienced the run around at various times when trying to gain information about something concerning us in our own personal lives. It is a frustrating feeling and often times we just give up and deal with whatever the problem is. It is important that our students don't get frustrated and just give up.

Contributor: Donna McCauley

- The commitment I have made to teach Col 101 to serve as a mentor for incoming students. Helping students connect to the resources and tools available on this campus to be successful.

Contributor: Jim McIntyre

- My methods for retaining students are fairly simple. I address them quickly if a problem should arise. I do not keep secrets, or give that impression. Likewise, if I feel a student has reached a point where they cannot pass my class, I will suggest they drop, but continue to attend in order to do better next semester. All of the above sound fairly negative. On the positive side, I get to know them on a first name basis, say high if I see them outside of class/around campus. I also have conversations with them about outside issues during the breaks and before class. I feel this allows us to bridge the gap between student and faculty, and that we are all in the adventure of learning together.

Contributor: Raiana Mearns

- Students in our GED program were typically not successful in their school experience. They left school for many reasons, but they usually have a certain amount of fear associated with returning to school. Some of our older adults left school in the elementary grades and feel intimidated in a classroom of mixed ages. I let students determine the classroom norms on the first night. They are the rules that everyone can live with. I also have students write their expectations of the class, and I let them know what I expect from them.

Contributor: Mary Jo Murphy

- One of the critical components for Workforce Development is to ensure a tight connection between our training and job growth. That growth can mean getting a job for an unemployed person, helping someone in career transition or preparing the employed for a promotion. We do this by nurturing relationships with employers. We communicate these relationships to students by employer participation in job fairs. Employers offer interviews to our successful students because of the high quality of training at Moraine.

Contributor: John Nash

- I have always found that if people know your name, you feel more included in the group and hold yourself more accountable toward participation in the group. During the first 3 weeks of class, I break students into different groups each week and require them to learn each group member's name. Before answering questions in class, they must first name all of their group members. On my midterm, I often have an extra credit question to the effect of "List the names of 15 of your classmates." I am always amazed at how fun and friendly the class becomes once they officially know each other.

Contributor: Susan O'Keefe

- Mainly my strategy for student retention is to offer them encouragement and assistance if they feel they are struggling in the class. Though this has only been my first semester at MVCC, I have encountered a diverse group of students having taught evening, Saturday, and traditional class both on campus, at Andrews and Eisenhower. The students not interested in learning, aren't interested no matter what you say or do. They are going to drop classes no matter what. Many don't return after the first class. However, I have found that students that think all hope is lost, if you reach out to them and offer them encouragement, tell them they can do it, show them the light at the end of the tunnel, and offer to help directly or indirectly, they will continue to work at it while staying in class.

Contributor: Robert Palagi

- I understand and recognize the level of practical knowledge that each adult student brings to class is through their accumulated life experiences with work-related activities, family responsibilities and previous education. The adult student relates to learning through these life experiences and has a greater understanding of its value in the classroom when the instructor reinforced these relationships of experienced knowledge to a new academic experience.

Contributor: Susan Phelan

- Maintaining files of contact information on students to notify them of opportunities; Asking each student "What Next?" at the end of each semester, faculty visits to foundation or introductory courses (MRT-110; BNAT, etc.)

Contributor: Enza Piech

- When there is someone who has a strong knowledge base, I allow that person to help out those who struggle. It's a "win-win" since they often enjoy sharing their knowledge. Although initially the other classmates may want to avoid them, this is a way for them to share and others to benefit.

Contributor: Ted Powers

- GLACIER and MASTODON have an open door policy for students who want to write for them. This gives us a great deal of diversity to attract more readers. We want to hear

from anyone who wants to contribute to student publications. The best way to support students campus wide is to not say NO! Don't say you don't know! Send them to someone who does. Don't say it's not your job! Send them to someone who can help. Don't say you don't have time to help them! Without students you will have lots of time on your hands. The biggest NO is don't give them false information if you don't know for sure it is correct please help them find the right person to give them the right answer. Don't say this student has a bad attitude. Take some time to guide them to the right path. Most of all want to be here and want to help students.

Contributor: Tiffany Robinson

- The instructors have to engage ALL of their students. If students are engaged and they feel like they are a part of what is going on, they will succeed and have fun in the process. Once the instructors have the students engaged it will be easy for the students to buy in to what the instructor is teaching. Learning has to be fun! Instructors have to find a way to make a connection between the textbooks and the real world. As I reflect back on my journey at Moraine, I can say that Moraine has some awesome instructors that will help you realize that what you're doing here every day is connected to the real world. So the motto, "changing lives, for a changing world is perfect for Moraine Valley."

Contributor: Feiruz "Faye" Shehadi

- I have found that teaching a language means to engage the students not only through exercises in structured textbook applications, but also through improvisation. In my beginning writing classes when I am teaching "descriptive paragraphs or essays, I use an improved learning tool of scenes of natural and man-made landscapes and architecture taken from old calendar months. The students are directed to work in groups of three and write as many descriptive lines about the scene they are describing. You would be surprised in the amount of description; for example, a scene from the Magnificent Mile can generate in color, shapes, mood, personal observation and impressions. Moreover, when each group presents its individual calendar scene, oftentimes, the rest of the class sees more than the presenter. This exercise engages students to work and contribute to a group effort and to look for detail.

The textbook should be the catalyst for more dramatic use - for example, this past semester, we watched an episode of an old "The Lucy Show". Then, my class (Beginning Intensive Writing) had to observe and answer questions about the funny episode. For me, collegewide student retention requires both a traditional teaching model and improvisational teaching model where the student puts down the book and real life steps, like watching a classic TV show.

Contributor: Carol Straka

- I take daily attendance. In some courses I count it as part of their grade.
- I am almost never absent. If I show up everyday, it demonstrates the importance I place on attendance – both at school and work.
- I try to learn my students' names as quickly as possible. I have the students make nameplates and write their names on both sides (both for me and for their fellow

students to see). After each class session, I tell students to use the nameplates as bookmarks and bring them to the next class session.

- Instead of asking, "Do you have any questions?" I ask "What questions do you have?". By phrasing the question differently, I imply that I expect questions; and thus (I believe) make it easier and less intimidating for students to ask questions.
- I pause during lectures and ask the students questions such as "Why do you think this is true?" "What difference does it make if this vs. that happens?" This helps break up the lecture and makes student actively think about the material.
- I search the Internet and newspapers for jokes, cartoons, and stories that pertain to my course. I want to show students that I enjoy the material and that learning can be fun. Students often bring in jokes, cartoons and stories that they find.
- I set and enforce deadlines for work. Depending on the course, late work is either not accepted or is docked points (whatever the reason). Students have a week in which to complete assignments and a session schedule which clearly lists the deadlines for each assignment. After a time or two of being docked points, students get back on track because they know I mean business or they drop out because of their lack of interest.
- Since students in my program area are future office workers, I try to relate as much of our class work as possible to the business world; what an employer would expect, what an office worker should expect, what differences one might expect to see from office to office, etc. Students who see a need for the course content are more likely to listen, participate, and retain.
- I often start an assignment with the students. I read somewhere in the literature that students are more likely to complete an assignment if it is started at school. The students and I do the first few questions/problems together in class; then I ask the student to finish the assignment at home.
- I give students a final evaluation sheet, listing all the items on which they will be graded and the corresponding percentages. Then, as the course progresses, I have students fill in their final evaluation sheet so that they have a list of all their grades. I don't know if this retains students, but it keeps them abreast of the evaluation process that I use.
- I participate in the Early Warning System used at the college. Very few students contact me as a result of the system, however, very few students improve afterwards. I guess "a few" is better than "none".

Contributor: Alice Stefaniak

- I generally get to know some of the students well to find out about their lives and what they do for a living. That seems to make a connection with them. I also try to call them all by name as soon as I can and make name cards which they use until I know them. These cards are used each time we meet and I collect them after each class.
- I think that some students sign up for so many classes that they drop those that have some meatier assignments in them. As soon as the students read the syllabus they make a decision. I suggest that the beginning skills class that all students take talk about the fact that the classes are not designed to be easy.

Contributor: Misha Turner

- I tend to use the personal approach with students. This means taking the time to ask students how they are doing when I am walking across campus and on many occasions inviting them to my office. I let them know that I am available to answer questions or

direct them to the appropriate person(s). I have met and provided support and informally mentored many students here at Moraine Valley using this technique.

Contributor: Kristine VanBaren

- In each of my classes I have a mandatory attendance policy and attendance/class participation is a portion of their final grade (For each day present, students earn one point toward the attendance portion of the grade. Students can miss 3 class sessions without a negative effect on their grade.). I take attendance daily as well as use student names in my examples.

Contributor: Maria Vlamakis

- Use the homework/lab assignments as a learning tool done in class. Heavily interact with students during the lab time answering questions and reinforcing the lecture content.

Contributor: Gayle Wengelewski

- I start each class out with an open ended question that each member of the class has to respond to, and then ask the next member of the class the same question. This brings a feeling of community to the classroom. When you are together for three hours, it helps to get to know each other. Make your class fun. Think of creative ways to introduce new material that allows the students to have some fun and also learn. Utilize the world wide web for ideas on how to do this if you are not creative. When students want to come to class, they will learn more.

Contributor: Cara Williams

- Before beginning a topic, I like to find out what the class already knows. At that time, I will call on students BY NAME to tell what the specific topic means to them. This makes them feel known and an important part of the class. Furthermore, this strategy triggers previous knowledge. Research shows that when students connect information to past knowledge or personal experiences, they are more likely to remember it.

Contributor: Amy Williamson

- I noticed how actively involved students get in my online class discussions and wanted a way to keep that going for all my students. Something new I am doing is social networking based on the idea of social retention strategies. I am using ning.com. All students in every class are invited but they are not required to join the site. The advantage of a site like ning.com over BlackBoard or other course management systems is that ning.com remains even after the course is over. My goal is for the relationships the students develop in the course to continue after the course is over. If they do, this social support may help students stay in college -- especially with students who may only be on campus long enough for class and whose family and friends may not quite understand what college is about and thus may not always be as supportive as they'd like to be. The potential also exists for former students who have moved on to continue in the discussions and mentor current students.

- I use cooperative activities as often as possible to enhance students connection to others in the class and to give them a sense or responsibility to others in their group.
- I also speak to students one on one if their grades seem to be poor.
- I learn students name in the first couple of weeks and greet them by name.
- I take attendance regularly.
- I try to find out some personal information so that we have a connection.

Contributor: Nancy Woodard

- I take attendance for the first three weeks so that I am sure I can relate a face to a name. Then as often as possible I address students by their name. I do this in person an in email as well. I think this helps make them feel part of the "team" (or the class). After I know their name, I just put out a sign-in sheet for them each day. Once I start the class, I put a line on the sign in sheet to show those that arrive on time, and those that sign in late. It helps reinforce coming to class on time. Of course, I have those that regularly sign in late everyday and don't care. I have been tempted to lock the door after a certain time as I have heard other instructors' do. However, for those that have "real" problems getting to class on time, I am not sure this is fair to them. For those that come in late, I make it clear that it is THEIR responsibility to get announcements and anything they missed from a classmate.
- Near the beginning of the semester I try to talk to students individually before or after class. I might comment on their work so far, their last quiz, or their participation in class. I try to keep this positive. This way they know I am aware, watching, and I appreciate their work/participation/etc. for those students who do not seem "into the class", I try to pull them aside and ask them if they understand the assignment, or the syllabus, or what is expected.
- My policy is that I do not accept late assignments. However, I amend this by saying that if they have a problem, and COMMUNICATE with me in ADVANCE of the due date that I will take this into consideration. But, do not expect any extension the night before, or the day of a due date! I hold to this policy and remind those who complain that this IS the policy and to uphold the policy as well as maintain the integrity of the course policies that I will stick to the policy.

Contributor: Susan Yach

- When students stop by the Library Information Desk, looking for assistance when searching for library materials for research papers or classroom assignments, they are informed about Interlibrary Loan. This free service is available to all students, faculty, and staff members with a valid ID. The Library will borrow books, magazine articles or other materials for any item not in our collection. Students submit the ILL Request Form that is on the Library website and when the item arrives, pick it up at the Circulation Desk. The Library can request items from here in Illinois and out of state libraries as well. Our goal is to find any and all information resources that are needed by the Moraine Valley community.