

**Question 8:**  
***How do you motivate your students to perform well academically?***

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“By establishing appropriately high expectations, conveying them as intellectual challenges rather than as technical requirements, and by modeling them in my own preparation and performance. My experience is that students respond well to challenges that seem meaningful to them, that they perform up to the level expected of them, and that they respect instructors who do not underestimate their ability or potential.”

David Zarefsky, Northwestern University  
2012 Wallace A. Bacon Lifetime Teaching Excellence Award

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“Motivating students to perform well academically in Public Speaking courses challenged me continuously throughout my teaching career. Eventually, I decided the best way to motivate students was to actively involve them in acquiring public speaking skills necessary for success through some non-threatening, everyone can succeed activities. For example, two activities spring to mind immediately. The first is an eye contact exercise that was shared at an NCA G.I.F.T.S program which required students to present some PowerPoint slides while maintaining eye contact for three seconds with each person in the class audience. The class evaluated the eye contact by raising a smiley face when the speaker had maintained eye contact for three seconds with that individual. No one could finish until every member of the class had raised the smiley face. Students were motivated to succeed because each one knew what it felt like to be valued as a special listener and how hard it was to maintain that eye contact. The application was evaluated in speeches and, once I adopted this activity, student eye contact improved immensely. I also demonstrated nine ways a speaker can help listeners to listen by giving a short speech. The students had to determine what strategies I used and were encouraged to use those they found most effective. Activities like these provide students with skills they know they can use to perform well academically.”

Jean Ann Streiff, Oakland Catholic HS (Pittsburgh, PA)  
2006 Marcella E. Oberle Award for Outstanding Teaching in Grades K-12

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“I try to keep in mind that overwhelmingly students want to learn and not take personally situations when they haven’t paid attention or ignored specifics of an assignment. But I then urge them to take responsibility for their behavior and give them another chance. I’ve found that this approach often motivates students to try harder.

In graduate classes, I never identify a problem in the argument in a student’s essay without suggesting a potential solution. I also copy-edit portions of graduate papers to show them how to develop the kind of writing style that is needed to produce peer-reviewed publications. I try to remember how hard it was to learn the demands of an

appropriate academic style and provide models for students in developing their own academic style.”

Robert C. Rowland, University of Kansas

2005 Donald H. Ecroyd Award for Outstanding Teaching in Higher Education

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“Most communication majors enter a quantitative research methods course with an incredible fear of math. I was no different. I struggled with math throughout my elementary, high school, and undergraduate education. It all made sense for me in graduate school when I had an excellent teacher and simultaneously studied math and statistics within the context of communication. It is surprising to many that I most enjoy teaching quantitative research methods. On the first day, I tell my story and detail the learning challenges I faced with math and statistics. I explain how I will not focus on making students *like* the material. Instead, I focus on effective ways of teaching the challenging material so students will *learn*. Especially in a quantitative research methods course, learning is a prerequisite to liking. Throughout the course, I employ scaffolding techniques to motivate students and help them learn. First, I lecture through an example SPSS assignment and demonstrate how to run and interpret the statistical test. Second, students receive another SPSS assignment and work on the assignment in class with a partner. Together, they run and interpret the test while I stand nearby to answer questions. We then discuss the results together as a class. Students are then confident, motivated, and prepared to complete an assignment on their own for homework. We follow this approach throughout the semester. By the end of the course, students will have completed an entire research study from start to finish, with project deliverables in poster form and traditional research paper format. I have found that students are often the most motivated in this class because they strive to conquer their fear of math. Students emerge from the course as competent communicators who understand and appreciate the role of statistics in communication.”

Joseph P. Mazer, Clemson University

2013 CSCA Outstanding New Teacher Award

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“Relevance, relevance, relevance! At the beginning of the semester, I work diligently to learn about my students. What are their preferred names? Their interests? Professional goals? Goals for our course? In addition to a series of icebreaker activities, I often ask them to complete a Student Information Worksheet that prompts students to provide information about their academic and professional goals, personal interests (e.g., favorite television shows, hobbies, and music), and concerns. This helps me tailor my presentations, activities, and assignments to my students.

Whenever I develop an assignment or lesson plan, I ask myself, ‘Why should my students care about this topic? How can I make it more relevant to their personal, professional, or academic interests?’ When students discover how course concepts are relevant to different aspects of their lives, their motivation soars!”

Lisa K. Hanasono, Bowling Green State University

## 2015 CSCA Outstanding New Teacher Award

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“I am not sure it is always possible to motivate students to perform well academically. I do think it is possible to motivate students to do the best given their ability. In any given classroom, we have a range of abilities and frankly motivation. Where someone might be completely content with a ‘C’ in the course, someone else might always strive for an ‘A.’ Furthermore, someone may not have the ability to get an ‘A’ in a course. This presents a challenge for every instructor. One of the ways I try to help students do well in a course is by providing a range of assignment types so that if they write well, a paper would be helpful or if they speak well, a presentation would help them achieve. Having more than one way to get at what students ‘know’ is helpful to them. Even on tests, providing a range of question types can be helpful. One thing I often do in an essay section of a test is to give them more essay questions than I want them to answer. I tell them I want them to write on something they want to write on and my goal is to see what they know rather than what they don’t know. I do think they appreciate this strategy and that it is one thing that encourages them to do well.”

Sara Chudnovsky Weintraub, Regis College

2014 ECA Donald H. Ecroyd & Caroline Drummond Ecroyd Teaching Excellence Award

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“I require them to try to do things they don’t think they can do and reward them when they make progress toward those goals.”

Joe Ayres, Washington State University

2005 Wallace A. Bacon Lifetime Teaching Excellence Award

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“I do two things. I show students how much I care about their learning--not their grades or their compliance with rules, but *learning*. Second, I respect students and show that respect as often as possible. Students are often grade focused because that is what our educational system emphasizes. To focus their attention on learning, I use Bloom’s taxonomy to guide my learning objectives, assignments, and exam questions. I share Bloom’s taxonomy in my syllabus and explain to students (in several small doses) how the levels differ and how I implement the taxonomy. When students understand that an assignment is designed to assess their ability to apply content, they see its value and are more willing to work hard.

I believe showing respect is central to creating a positive student-teacher relationship. It goes both ways. I don’t expect students to respect me just because of my title and position, so I take the lead and show them respect. I do this by making rules that support their learning, not for my convenience. I look students in the eye when they speak and make a conscious effort to listen, even when it’s a ‘stupid question.’ I respect their time by starting and ending class on time. Assignments and activities are clearly linked to the learning objectives. I do what I say I’m going to do. I apologize if I make a mistake. I treat them like adults even when they don’t act like adults. And, most students

respond by being respectful and cooperative, which sets the stage for a positive teaching-learning experience.”

Ann Bainbridge Frymier, Miami University

2007 ECA Donald H. Ecroyd & Caroline Drummond Ecroyd Teaching Excellence Award

“I use different kinds of motivators depending upon the level of the class that I am teaching. For lower-division classes where I use more exams, I find that providing a study guide with terms to know and define (in their own words), along with a list of questions to answer, allows student to engage with course material in a more meaningful way. I ensure that the questions I write are directed toward higher level learning outcomes such as application and evaluation. By distributing a study guide, students learn what I find important, and it helps guide their reading to learn the broader, more important issues, rather than become obsessed with minutiae that are insignificant.

In lower-level classes I also allow students the opportunity to write exam questions and submit them to me the class prior to the exam. Sometimes I assign specific pages from the text and have students work in groups to develop questions. It not only allows them a chance to discuss and learn from each other, but also has the secondary benefit of teaching them that writing a good or ‘fair’ question takes some work.

In upper-division classes that involve more writing, either by way of papers or essay exams, I provide a list of reading questions, as often students have difficulty wading through journal articles. Again, it is a way of helping them apply, evaluate, and synthesize information that is important. I also provide a very specific rubric to students so that they know exactly how the paper and/or exam will be graded and how many points are assigned to each part of the rubric.”

Betsy Wackernagel Bach, University of Montana

2017 Donald H. Ecroyd Award for Outstanding Teaching in Higher Education