

# Preparing for the First Day of Class

"The first day of class sets the tone for the rest of the term .... [It is your opportunity to] convey your enthusiasm for the material and stimulate students' curiosity about topics that will be covered during the term ... create a relaxed, open classroom environment conducive to inquiry and participation ... let students know what you will expect from them and what they can expect from you and the course."

Barbara Gross Davis (1993)

## What do students want to know about the course?

- Learning goals
- Teaching and learning strategies
- Overview of content and readings
- Assessment and grading policies
- Important dates and deadlines

*You can provide this information through:*

- *A detailed syllabus*
- *A brief activity illustrating the kind of teaching and learning that will take place in the course*
- *A typical quiz, exam, or paper assignment, and your criteria for grading*

## What do you want to know about students?

- Name, interests, year, major
- Reasons for taking the course
- Relevant previous courses or prior knowledge
- What students hope to learn in the course

*You can get this information by having students:*

- *Provide information on 3x5 cards*
- *Interview and introduce a classmate*
- *Complete an ungraded assignment or quiz to show what students already know*
- *Write anonymous two-minute responses at the end of class; for example:*

*What's the most important thing you learned today?, What questions do you have about the class?*

## What do students want to know about you as their instructor?

- What to call you (Professor, Dr., first name?)
- How you teach, and how you expect students to learn
- Why the subject is interesting to you

*You can provide this information through*

- *Personal history of your work in this subject*
- *Comments from students in previous classes*
- *Examples that illustrate teaching strategies and ways of learning successfully in the class*

*Examples showing how you apply the course content in your work or use it to solve problems*