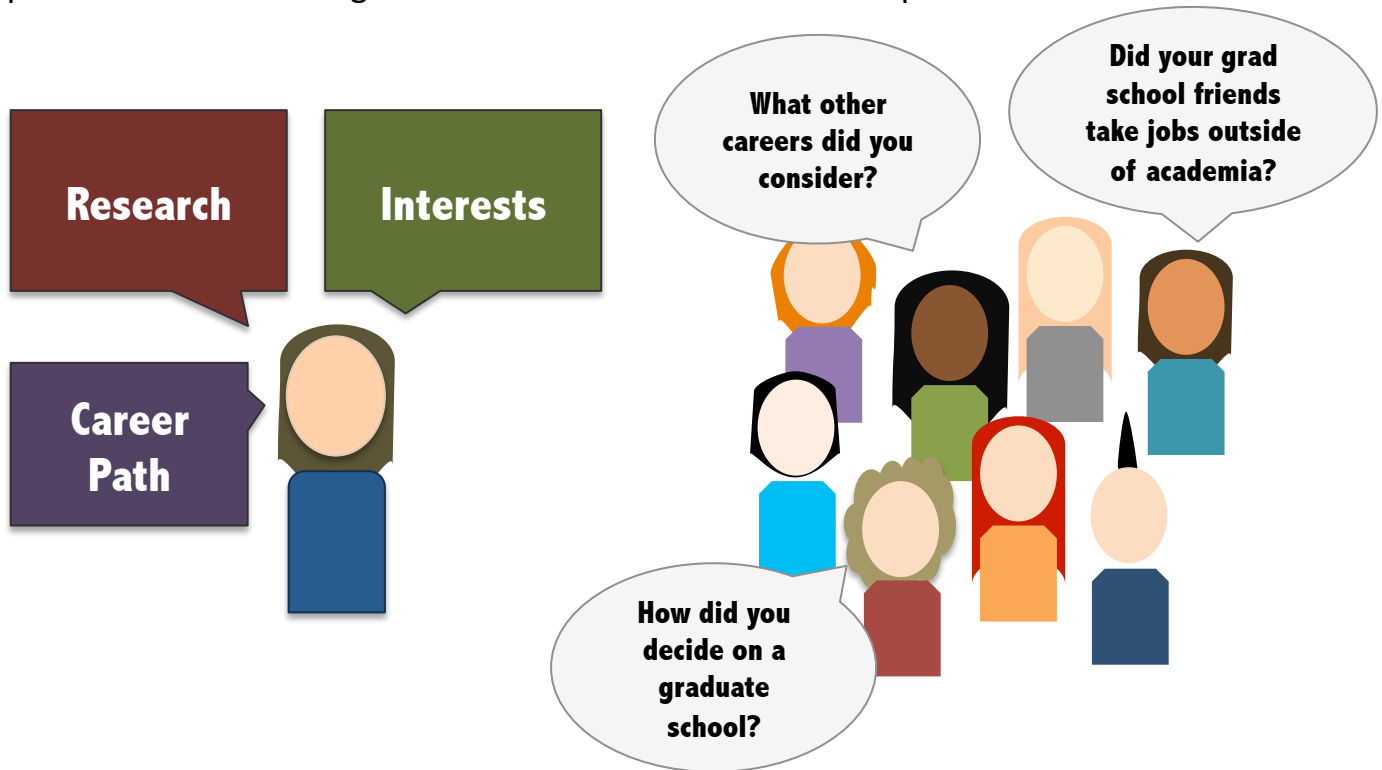


Connections Class: Improving Student-Faculty Interaction

Connections Classes are designed to enhance faculty-student interaction. Faculty spend 15-20 minutes during one class period sharing information about themselves, their research, their career path, their interests, how they decided to become a professor, and/or any other information they feel comfortable sharing with the class. Students can ask questions and the dialogue is intended to be informal and open.



For suggestions and a close look into the grant-funded research using this activity, visit

oakland.edu/teachingtips

CETL adapted this material from Laila Guessous' contribution to the 2013 Instructional Fair at Oakland University.

Connections Class: Improving Student-Faculty Interaction

Connections Classes are designed to enhance faculty-student interaction in 1st and 2nd year engineering/STEM courses. Faculty spend 15-20 minutes during one class period sharing information about themselves, their research, their career path, their interests, how they decided to become a professor, and/or any other information they feel comfortable sharing with the class. Students can ask questions and the dialogue is intended to be informal and open.

Step-by-Step Instructions of Strategy:

1. Select one class period, preferably in the first third of the semester
2. Reserve the last 15-20 minutes for a Connections class
3. Announce to the class that you are going to stop the class lecture early in order to focus on something different then proceed to share information about yourself, your research, your interests, how you decided to become professor, etc.

You can get the discussion started by prompting students to ask you any questions about yourself, you career, or any topic that you are comfortable discussing with them.

If possible, bring a snack such as cookies to class (not necessary). This will create a more social, engaging and fun atmosphere and will make students feel even more comfortable. The goal of a Connections class is to humanize the faculty member and improve faculty-student interactions.

Additional Comments:

Three faculty members have implemented this initiative in their EGR courses in Winter 2013. Student survey results show that **92.7%** of the student respondents agree or strongly agree that there is value in having a 'Connection Class' in their engineering classes. Student comments were overwhelmingly positive and indicated that students felt more comfortable approaching the faculty member after the class. Results at other institutions point to similar results.

This strategy is being tested in SECS through a mini-grant from the NSF-funded ENGAGE program (<http://engageengineering.org>).

Name of Course that strategy is being implemented into: Introduction to Thermal Engineering (EGR 250). It was also implemented in EGR 240 and EGR 141

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