

**1. What makes a class a favorite? Think about your favorite class you've taken or taught and share the best qualities with your table.**

- What made this class your favorite?
- What best qualities would you recommend other classes incorporate?

In articulating what made a class a favorite, all of the groups' conversations focused on interactions within the classroom as the defining factor. This was true of discussions of both large (600+) and small classes. They spoke about what makes a class engaging and how influential faculty member personality can be.

Many discussions centered on characterizing professors of these favorite courses. Faculty were seen as being more approachable if they learned the students' names, and more favorable when they demonstrate passion and enthusiasm for the topic or class and are engaging speakers who "tell a story" about the content or their experience in the field. They also like when faculty weave in examples that connect content to the real-life we are living now (examples included connecting to social media and privacy, technology examples, and news articles) to make the material interesting and relevant.

Groups pointed to faculty who are attentive, aware, and hold students accountable by doing things like taking attendance in large enrollment courses and having policies of not using phones or laptops in class. One faculty member introduced a "Donut Rule" in their small class for accountability and mutual respect - anyone late or whose phone goes off during class (faculty included) brings donuts for the whole class at the next session. Describing interactions outside of the classroom, one group talked about a positive interaction during office hours for a business class where the professor "really helped with looking over exams [in detail before the meeting and] offered study advice." Another student explained their "teacher came to work in [the] lab even though it wasn't his office hours. Because the professors work hard, makes me want to work hard." This was contrasted against the comment of "least favorite - went to office hours and faculty member made student feel stupid" and where "professors expect you to know what they know."

Café participants characterized enjoyable or engaging classes as ones that created environments where "students feel that they can express themselves without reservation" and one that "allows you to voice opinions" highlighting preference for discussion-based classes. They understood that cultivating such environments can be challenging, but explained that in these courses "students are engaged and want to be involved and professors are as engaged as they expect students to be." In terms of classroom activities, groups discussed preferences for faculty to "break up PowerPoint lectures with short videos, discussions, [and] break-up into groups to discuss what you don't know" and classes with group discussion and hands-on learning.

## 2. How do students like to learn today? Which teaching practices are most effective in the classroom?

- Do you believe teaching practices have changed to meet new needs? How or how not?
- How is technology changing teaching and learning?

Students in the current Generation Z cohort have access to more and diverse digital resources yet articulate a preference for a blend of technology and non-technology use in lectures “balancing between “old-fashioned” methods and technologies” that engage multimedia formats but do not rely only on technology.

The numerous digital resources can help aid different mode preferences for learning by offering videos, readings, etc. and can enhance lectures by offering multimedia forms of content presentation, for example “Youtube videos can help you learn materials on your own outside of a class. Youtube videos can also help supplement your learning during a class - students thought that faculty members who make their own videos to supplement learning, such as solving extra problems, to be very helpful and worth the time invested on the faculty member’s part.” However some groups warned how technology can also work to create pressure and overwhelming amounts of information. There is a perception that while textbooks are no longer used by students as they access online resources immediately, “technology had great hopes for increased learning, but results in a distraction in the classroom [and has the] appearance of a gimmick on behalf of a student learning” and participants note that “technology in the classroom can only provide a certain level of instruction.”

Faculty expressed concerned with “whether students are learning more than just the “cool stuff” they present – do students realize the importance of what is being covered, do they extract the core principles in my slides? Students bear some responsibility for figuring out test content.” In terms of navigating material, one group explains that “previous generations extract information from a lot of information; current students need to know what is important. How do students get guidance for finding what is important? [Faculty help students] structure and find main points - guided through process.” Another group explained that “students prefer [Powerpoint slides] that are structured in a way to easily take notes from, [incorporating] not too much technology because it can be distracting.” Students like structured notes but warn against using slides that only feature large amounts of text and students “do not like having a completely filled out ppt as the main source of note content.” Instead, they would like notes or Powerpoint slides “available ahead of the class with blanks that allows them to write some portions down but not the entire notes.” Making notes available online can also help students overcome a common learning barrier that results in missing material during a lecture; one student explained they cannot write and listen simultaneously “I have to choose one.” Another spoke about a faculty member learning their students’ needs at the beginning of a semester by asking them to write out a response to “How do you learn best?” and this student went on to explain that is how the faculty member learned that two students in the class requested the notes ahead of class while the rest of the class was comfortable taking notes.

Students appreciate choice in how they take notes during class where some prefer hand-written or digital notes and the preference often depends on the class. One student told a story of a professor who preferred students take handwritten notes but would give students the option to take notes on their laptop under the condition that they email their notes to the professor at the end of class. This acted like an accountability mechanism to keep students engaged in the note-taking process and not be tempted to engage in other digital distractions on their laptops.

In terms of clarity of expectations and evaluation, “student wants [a] lot of transparency in grading, clear learning objectives.” They appreciate when faculty “post samples of good essays and good samples” and while some complain about going over deadline or expectation details, participants did prefer when faculty made these timelines clear: “syllabus quizzes are good and not annoying [and while] some students don’t like the quizzes just talk about them at the beginning, and list the [quiz?] schedule above the assignments on Canvas.”

**3. What do you want to get out of your academic experience at Clemson (or what do you want for your students)?**

- Why do students today go to college?
- What motivates student learning?

Nearly all of the groups had students who framed going to college as being necessary to get a desirable job. While some discussed exposure to many majors and “finding something they are passionate about,” nearly all groups talked about seeing their time at Clemson as a path to career placement and preparation with a focus on “ability to get good career and be prepared” and “wanted opportunities in future!”

Groups discussed external expectations to go to college from a professional standpoint of “if you don’t have a degree you don’t have credibility in the job market” with many expressing a perception that going to college does not feel optional to young people anymore with degrees being required to get jobs. Some felt that going to college and earning a degree felt more like things on a checklist that must be done to get a job. Others spoke of expectations from parents and other family members to go to college or for being a first generation college student “family culture of studying motivates! First person in college is motivation.”

Some groups talked about time in college being used to “learn something that will apply after college” by learning a range of skills and knowledge to be applied after their time at Clemson. One group noted that “part of the academic experience is to learn about learning and how to acquire new skills.” Some also expressed a drive for continuous professional development and remaining agile by utilizing developing technology “comfortable going into my first day or work, professional development skills after classes, networking, leadership, finance, business etiquette, how to learn new things with regards to new technologies and how fast those technologies are changing, gaining internship or experiences outside the classroom to prepare me for life after Clemson.” One group addressed current career trends of progressing through multiple job roles over a career and wanting their time at Clemson to prepare them for shifts “5 careers in their lifetime - learn skills that apply to different areas, being flexible and resourceful within career, confidence and authority in the information they know.”

Some of the groups spoke about faculty influencing their major choice and professional development stating appreciation for faculty who ask them what they want to learn as well as “professors that take interest and influence what major and career choices we make” and “professor that had an open day - learned about resumés, interviews, etc.” Faculty members of one group explained their hopes for students today and the value of diverse knowledge development as “excited about learning and curious about the world, I want students debating in the dorm room about topics in class, what happens 5 years later after you get your first job, students lack the communications, leadership skills, gen ed classes force you to get out of your comfort zone, seeing the bigger picture.”

#### 4. Are faculty-student relationships important today? Why or why not?

- What are some ways faculty and students can get to know each other better?
- What can faculty do in large lecture classrooms to get to know students?

All of the groups agreed that relationships and positive interactions between faculty and students inside and outside of the classroom are important, especially on this campus where there is a shared perception that students are not always prioritized. Individuals noted that there are “issues with tenured track professors not putting emphasis on their undergraduates” and that this may be “the consequences of having R1 faculty not incentivized as tenure track to spend more time on students.” Students appreciate a personal investment from faculty and “compassionate comments are perceived by students as “he cares.”” Several explained that forging these relationships is a shared responsibility where faculty need to make the offer of a personal connection by being approachable (learning names and personalities of students) and encouraging personal interaction, and then “students need to be the one to initiate conversation.”

Other groups related personal connections to students’ feelings of value and motivation. Students feel an increased sense of connection when faculty interact with them in interpersonal ways, as one group explains, “when a faculty member engages you on a non-class-specific topic – like “How are you doing today? Traveling for Spring Break? etc., we get to be human and more than just a seat-filler.” Other students shared that “when a faculty member knows my name, it encourages motivation and engagement; when someone knows my name, they can show me personal support, but also call me out if I’m wrong,” and this extends to interactions in office hours where “attending office hours increased learning because personal relationship increases accountability.”

Benefits of personal connections were also discussed and connected to motivation where “students will be more motivated when they have a good relationship” and that relationships are “definitely important, faculty knowing the student helps with focus and motivation in the class and makes you feel more comfortable with teacher and class.” Groups explain that these relationships help faculty get to know their students’ learning preferences and enhance learning stating that “faculty-student relationships are important, [and] can help teachers know better how their students learn best,” and that these relationships “enable faculty to better understand preferred student learning styles and tailor their lessons for their audience.”

Students pointed out the benefit of current relationships with faculty as creating future opportunities. These connections could offer potential networking, make students aware of research and other opportunities, and recognizing it was “important to interact with other people you could be advised by.” Benefits of face-to-face interactions were not limited to faculty as one person explained that “people think they can bypass librarians, but they usually come away with more info through face-to-face interaction.”

Finally, some groups discussed personal connection in an “technology consumed” era. Some pointed to barriers created by technology explaining that these relationships are “more [important] than ever before. Technology can diminish the relationship because students actually had to come to office hours before,” and another faculty member explained “it’s more important today than ever before because of this [*motions to tablets and phones on table*],” and “students think they can find everything online.” Several faculty echoed the perception that “online classes present a challenge to foster positive relationships between student and professor” where one faculty member shared “I feared that online classes would suffer do to loss of relationship.”