About the Week of Reflection

Confucius wrote, “Knowledge without thought is labor lost.” By this standard, it is often disheartening how much effort is wasted on college campuses each year.

There are a myriad of depressing statistics about how little students retain of what they hear, read or do. Plenty of others have bemoaned the consumerist notions of education that seem so pervasive and conspire to relegate student learning to mere vocational training in which the diploma is the ultimate goal. The result is that students expect less and less to be transformed by their college experiences. The value of education, like that of cars, appears to plummet the moment it leaves the proverbial showroom floor.

In response, the Teaching Excellence Center and the Division of University Affairs present “A Week of Reflection.” This event is intended to encourage students to pause and reflect upon everything that they have learned both inside and outside of the classroom this year and how it has changed them.

In addition to daily events on a variety of themes, we provide this classroom guide and encourage all faculty who are interested to use this guide to prompt discussion in their course during this week.

Excerpts are used with permission from “Keep the Change: Using Reflection to Frame the Transformative Qualities of Learning” by Adam Peck, About Campus, Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Classroom Reflection Guide

Metacognition is thinking about how we think as well as considering how we come to believe what we believe and know what we know and how we use all of this to construct the lens through which we perceive our worldview. This is decidedly heavy stuff. And while this may be interesting to educators from a number of perspectives, it is particularly salient to our understanding of our own personal development in college. We may not experience the changes that take place during college without some assistance. In much the same way that a bucket thrown into a dry well gives no water, we have to help the students to drill their wells before we try to extract this understanding.

The faculty-guided reflections on the next page are designed to prompt discussion on this topic and are designed to fit into a number of time commitments.

Selected Events.
For a complete list, visit sfasu.edu/reflection.

Monday, April 11
Today’s reflection theme is Wellness.
Wellness Fair
Visit with local and SFA vendors and develop healthy living habits. This event takes place on Monday, April 11 from Noon until 5 p.m. in the Lobby of the Recreation Center. In addition, there will be guided reflections on the electronic screens of various pieces of exercise equipment.

Tuesday, April 12
Today’s reflection theme is Service.
Community Service Impact Photo Display
Reflect on the impact of your community service experiences this year. Visit the photo wall from 11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m. in the Spirit Lounge of the Baker Pattillo Student Center. This event will feature video blogging and free prizes.

Wednesday, April 13
Today’s reflection theme is Scholarship.
Teaching Excellence Convocation
The Teaching Excellence Convocation recognizes individuals for their contribution to the University through excellence as teachers. The program will be held in the Grand Ballroom of the Baker Pattillo Student Center at 3:30 p.m.

Thursday, April 14
Today’s reflection theme is Leadership.
Apollo 12 Astronaut Alan Bean
Alan Bean, the fourth man to walk on the moon and an award-winning artist, will be featured in an event entitled, “Leaving a Legacy One Step at a Time.” This program is the keynote event for this year’s Week of Reflection and is co-sponsored by Student Government Association and the Archie McDonald Speaker Series at Stephen F. Austin State University.

Friday, April 15
Today’s reflection theme is Diversity.
Diversity in Action: Panel Discussions
How can we teach all students? Today’s student population is increasingly more diverse. How can we meet the needs of all students especially non-native English speakers in our classrooms? Come hear about strategies and ideas related to student diversity. Representatives from the community, local school districts and university will talk about why it is important to teach all students. This event will be held in the Tiered Meeting Room of the Baker Pattillo Student Center (Room 2.201) from 1 p.m. – 3 p.m.
Questions for Short Reflections (5-10 Minutes)

This short reflective exercise takes the form of a class discussion and is intended to prompt thought about learning in the course and how it has connected to the student’s previous learning and learning in other areas.

Guiding Questions:
What have you learned so far in this class that you did not previously know?
Can you think of a time where something you learned in this class explained or clarified something you did not previously understand?
Can you think of a time where your work in an extracurricular program such as an activity or organization helped you to understand something you learned in this or other classes?
What would you like to learn more about in this class?
How will what you have learned this year impact your future?
How does your learning in this class interrelate with learning in other areas?
Consider giving students a few moments at the end to make notes. Collecting the notes may make for some very interesting “artifacts of learning” to use for assessment or course planning.

Longer Reflective Activities - Minute Papers

Ask students to take five minutes of class to write a “minute paper” answering the question, “What I have learned in this class and why does it matter?”
Collect the papers and then guide a discussion about students’ different responses.

The following questions may be useful in guiding this discussion:

• How has what you have learned in this class prepared you for future challenges?
• How often have you thought about what you have learned in this class?
• How do you think what you have learned in this class will relate to things you learned previously or in the future?

Collecting the “minute papers” may make for very interesting “artifacts of learning” to use for assessment or course planning purposes.

Reflective Discussions/Pair Share

Divide students into small groups appropriate to the overall size of the class. For very small classes you may put students in groups of two instead.
Give each group a question to discuss. Three questions are listed here. Again, you may want to develop your own questions that are pertinent to the class or develop additional questions for a larger group.

Question 1: In what ways have your views of higher education changed since coming here as a student?
Question 2: What is something you have learned in this course that has surprised you?
Question 3: What topic(s) that has already been covered in this course has made you desire to learn more?

Have each group report their discussion to the rest of the class.