



INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

August 2, 2018 ♦ Vol. XL, No. 24

Let Me Take a Selfie

Student engagement in the classroom and on campus is thought to improve students' grades and increase retention rates. Having students involved in on-campus activities is beneficial because of the personal connections and relationships students build through their participation in those activities. While some students embrace in-classroom engagement activities, other students may be timid or may not be interested in participating. One way to provide students with knowledge about campus resources and amenities and promote student relationships is through a selfie scavenger hunt. Since most students are proficient in taking selfies, a selfie scavenger hunt can be a fun and familiar activity.

The Scavenger Hunt

I designed the selfie scavenger hunt to be administered on the first day of class to my first-year level classes. On the first day of class I begin with a content-based, true or false, group quiz to preview content for the year. I then go over the course syllabus and address safety procedures. At the end of the class I assign the selfie scavenger hunt for extra credit. The scavenger hunt is a voluntary extra-credit activity that takes approximately 20 minutes outside of class.

To participate in the scavenger hunt, students must have at least three and no more than five people in their student groups. The student groups are relatively small because I want students to get to know at least two of their classmates. In addition, I do not want the groups to be too large because individual students may become socially intimidated and feel uncomfortable.

To complete the scavenger hunt, students are required to take selfies with all of their group members in front of items and places on campus listed on the activity sheet. For example, I have included the learning resource center, fitness center, café, library, test center, and my office on the scavenger hunt activity list. At various campus locations, students must also find items listed on activity sheet. In the learning center, the "tutoring by course content schedule" must be found and pictured in their group selfies. In the library, a specific article must be found in the database and be included in students' group selfies.

There are also difficult-to-find items and places on the scavenger hunt activity list. Consequently, new students generally need to ask other individuals where to find these items or places. For some students, the task of locating the difficult-to-find items and places forces them to converse with their peers when their normal defaults would be to avoid eye contact and look at their phones. An example

of a hard-to-find item is a specific bookmark given out by a librarian. The goal of the scavenger hunt list is to introduce students to places on campus that will help them academically or help them engage in campus life. By students getting to know their peers in their scavenger hunt groups, students are less socially intimidated and are more willing to go back to their peers when they need help.

Bonding Through Competition

All student teams that complete the scavenger hunt receive three extra-credit points towards their final grades. In order to promote bonding between group members and increase adrenaline, the first student group team to finish the scavenger hunt receives an additional two extra-credit points to their final grades. I have found that students often share their phone numbers and scavenger hunt pictures with their group members. By participating in the scavenger hunt and sharing their phone numbers with their peers, students now have at least two other people in the class who they can contact with questions about the course content. The students from the scavenger hunt groups also end up sitting together in class and make plans outside of class for lunch or to study. One of the goals of the scavenger hunt is to make students feel comfortable with and accountable to someone else in the class. If a student does not come to class, someone from his or her scavenger hunt group will check on him or her. If a student does not understand something or know how to do something, someone from his or her scavenger hunt group is able to help the student.

Results

I have tracked retention and failure rates for several semesters in classes that have had the opportunity to participate in the selfie scavenger hunt. The overall withdrawal rate for students who participated in the selfie scavenger hunt was less than one percent. The withdrawal rate for students in the same classes that elected to not participate in the selfie scavenger hunt was five percent. Similarly, the failure rate for those students who participated in the selfie scavenger hunt was less than one percent. The failure rate for students in the same classes who did not participate in the selfie scavenger hunt was seven percent. I would like to think the significantly lower withdrawal and failure rates for students who participated in the scavenger hunt meant that the activity developed relationships, support systems, and their campus engagement. However, it is also possible that the more motivated students—those who care about their grades—were the ones who chose to participate in the selfie scavenger hunt in the first place.

Qualitative Feedback

Students often provide positive comments on the end-of-course survey about how the scavenger hunt impacted their classroom and campus experiences. When students were asked, "What did you find beneficial and what would you have changed about the course," students frequently listed the selfie scavenger hunt under the beneficial response section. Several repeating comments that students made about the scavenger hunt were, "I actually made friends in this class," and, "I didn't know we had a fitness center." Students have also told me the scavenger hunt made a difference in their academics because they knew where to go for tutoring, which research librarian would be able to help them with future assignments, and where to find my office for student hours. Knowing what resources are available increases the likelihood students will use those resources. None of my students have made negative comments about the scavenger hunt, although a few students who didn't participate in the activity commented that they wished they did.

Conclusion

The selfie scavenger hunt is a successful engagement strategy for students to make in-class friendships, discover how to access campus resources, and earn extra-credit points towards their grades in the course. From my experience, students who participated in the scavenger hunt were less likely to withdrawal from or fail the course. Additionally, the students who participated in the activity were more engaged in class and on campus. As a result of the scavenger hunt, I have noticed more engaged students who care about their success and the success of the students around them.

Regina Roof-Ray, *Assistant Professor, Behavioral and Social Science*

For further information, contact the author at Harford Community College, 401 Thomas Run Road, Bel Air, MD 21015. Email: roofray@harford.edu