

HIGHLIGHTED CHANGE IDEA

Impromptu Lectures is a change idea focused on improving student-professor relationships outside of the classroom. It strives to create a bond between students and professors that allows the student to feel comfortable approaching their professors, both in the context of course-related and non-course related topics. This event impacts the student-professor pairs, as well as the students and professors who attend (and do not present) and are given the opportunity to score the presentations.

PLAN

In this iteration, the plan was to have student professor pairs team up and present slides they had never seen before. The slide content was to consist of shortened thesis, doctoral presentations, and masters studies created by other professors on campus in their various post-undergraduate certifications. Other aspects of the event, such as the date, time, provided food, awards, and post-event surveys were modeled after previous impromptu lectures.

DO

Some steps to hosting a successful Impromptu Lectures included:

- Determining student-professor pairings
- Collecting information from professors
- Creating a rubric for those in attendance to grade the presentations
- Contacting campus Dining Services and making room reservations
- Purchasing prizes
- Creating a spreadsheet for score calculations
- Creating post-event survey questions

STUDY

The semester after the event, a survey was sent out to students and professors that asked a variety of questions. For example, faculty were asked how they would feel approaching students with nonacademic material and how they viewed students afterward, while students were asked if they would ask a professor for help and if this event made them feel more connected to their STEM community. Despite a late sending date, this survey strived to capture how attending Impromptu Lectures impacted students in the following semesters, not just on how they felt immediately afterward.

SUMMARY

When first entering college, one of the most unanticipated daunting tasks is gaining the confidence to speak to professors for academic and non-academic needs. Impromptu Lectures tackles these concerns, and the necessity for STEM students to feel welcome on campus, by hosting a low-stakes environment in which students and professors can interact in a non-consequential way. Overall, students and professors enjoyed the event. It improved the way professors viewed their students and made them more open to answering questions. It assisted students in having the confidence to approach their professors, and served as a common ground for all STEM majors to form a community and create friendships that encourage them to complete their STEM education.

PHOTOS & QUOTES

“This activity helps to even the playing field between faculty and students, and helps open doors that may otherwise remain closed. The students that participate are fun to work with and have interesting experiences and personalities.”

-Faculty Response



I think activities like these create a family within a family sort of thing. You have campus, then the STEM majors, then these kids. It creates closeness.

-Student Response

TIPS FOR OTHER INSTITUTIONAL TEAMS

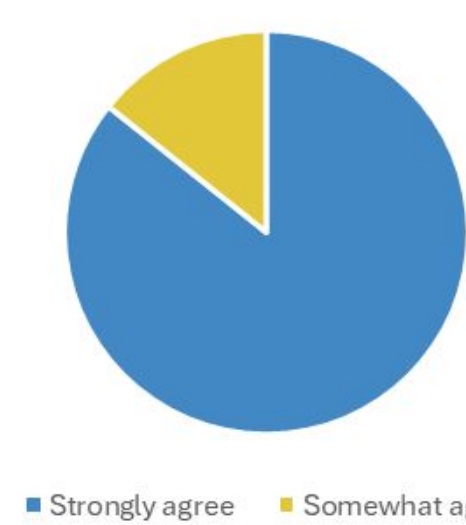
Prioritize finding presenters and slide content first, it is impossible to have an event if there is no one to watch! I would also recommend having the post-event survey available via a QR code for participants to complete immediately following the event. This ensures that much more data can be collected, and that the feelings of the student and professors can be captured in the moment. Adding a drawing for those who complete the survey also creates initiative.

ACT

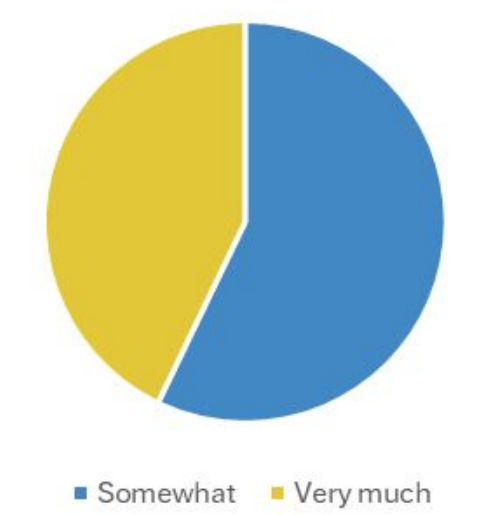
In alignment with its previous success and praise from students and professors, Fairmont State University's First2 Club plans to continue hosting this event for future semesters. Acceptance and belonging are two topics of great importance to First2, and this event incorporates them both. Presentation topics may shift to things like course content, pop culture references, or student special interests, but the same goal will always be at the forefront: creating a stress-free environment that fosters healthy relationships between professors and students, and increases the sense of belonging of STEM students on college campuses.

DATA

Prompt: I feel comfortable in my STEM community and classes.



After attending the Impromptu Lectures, how connected do you feel to your professors?



At a Glance:

- ~30 Attendees
- 4 Faculty and 7 Student Responses
- Feedback was either positive or neutral
- Mostly Juniors and Freshman

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The graph on the right addresses the process metric aspect, where students now feel either somewhat or very much connected to their professors. If a student feels more connected to their professors, then there is a higher probability that they will persist in their degree, or at least stay in the same field. The graph on the left addresses the outcome metric, where students either strongly agree or somewhat agree that they feel comfortable in their STEM community and classes. Fun events such as this one are a core element of increasing this comfort, as there is no academic aspect or associated course evaluation. It is simply a community-building activity to show students that there is a space for them in STEM and at Fairmont State University.

It is important to note that many students who attended this event and provided feedback were Juniors who already felt well established on campus. However, they also indicated positive experience with attendance of previous events.