IDEA PAPER #39

Establishing Rapport: Personal Interaction and Learning

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The IDEA *Report to the Faculty Member* includes information about how students perceived 20 of the instructor's teaching techniques and methods. These 20 items are grouped to form five "Teaching Approach" scales. One of these scales, *Establishing Rapport,* combines the four items listed below:

1. Displayed a personal interest in students and their learning
2. Found ways to help students answer their own questions
7. Explained the reasons for criticisms of students' academic performance
#20. Encouraged student-faculty interaction outside of class (office visits, phone calls, e-mail, etc.)

It is this scale, and these items, that is the subject of this paper.

The paper is set out in the following sections:

Section One   Why Rapport Matters
Section Two   Are Student Ratings of Rapport Accurate?
Section Three Improving Performance: Rationale and Strategies
Section Four   Conclusion and Bibliography

Section One — Why Rapport Matters

In her 1984 review of the literature, Hodgson (as quoted in Ramsden, 2003) wrote that many studies "...underline the vital importance of **respect and consideration for students** in effective university teaching" (p. 74). Ramsden (2003) supported this conclusion by noting that, "The emotional aspect of the teacher-student relationship is much more important than the traditional advice on methods and techniques of lecturing would suggest" (p. 74). Students were more likely to understand the content of a lecture if the lecturer interacted with them in a way that encouraged involvement, commitment, and interest. "Various studies of student ratings of teaching in higher education also identify a recurring factor variously labeled 'student centeredness,' 'respect for students,' and 'lecturer student rapport' among other aspects..." (ibid).

Rita Rodabaugh (1996) provided useful examples of how instructors can communicate respect for students: give them ample time to ask questions, allow challenges to the professor's views, and encourage open debate. She suggests that "Sarcasm and indifference can be easily conveyed through body language clues and this should be avoided. Rules about respecting students' privacy and using appropriate language relate to a higher tone in classrooms than might be found elsewhere. Students generally admire faculty members but they do not expect to be best friends with them" (Rodabaugh, 1996, p. 41).

Gorham (1988) found that humor, praising student performance, and engaging in conversations outside class were particularly important in contributing to learning as were self-disclosure, encouraging student talk, and asking questions about students' viewpoints or feelings. Using inclusive language was also on the positive list. He stressed that the importance of these behaviors increases as class size increases.

Terenzini and Pascarella (1994) described a number of "myths" related to teaching and learning, one of which was, "Students' academic and non-academic experiences are separate and unrelated areas of influence on learning" (p. 31). Carson (1996) adds "Studies of the relationship between emotions and cognition explain in another way the link between how students feel about their professors and how they perform in the classroom...The very first stages of both learning and remembering what was learned are affective...When we respond to something with emotional intensity, stress hormones excite the part of the brain that transforms impressions or short-term memories into long-term memories. The greater the affective intensity, the easier both the original imprinting and the recall" (p. 16). Zull (2002) also provides a deeper physiological basis for the connection between affective state and learning.

Young and Shaw (1999) asked both students and teachers to identify the factors that contribute most to effective teaching. Both agreed that the most important ones included not only traditional emphasis on motivating students and communicating clearly but also a stress on

empathy with students' needs, a factor clearly related to rapport. Feldman's 1988 review cited nine characteristics or criteria that students and faculty agreed were important for effective instruction. Three of these (italicized below) are related to the instructor's relationship to students.

> Knowledge of the subject or discipline
>
> Course preparation and organization
>
> Clarity and understanding
>
> Enthusiasm for subject/teaching
>
> *Sensitivity to/concern with students' level*
> *and learning progress*
>
> *Availability and helpfulness*
>
> Quality of examinations
>
> Impartiality in evaluating students
>
> *Overall fairness to students*

Three dimensions of teaching have consistently emerged as strong predictors of outcomes: enthusiasm/ expressiveness; clarity of explanation; and rapport/ interaction. The latter is hypothesized to influence outcomes by encouraging and rewarding active student participation. This is consistent with Young and Shaw's (1999) conclusion that rapport's effect, unlike that of skills in communicating and motivating students, is an indirect one. It establishes a context, which influences what is learned in important ways (Tiberius, 1993). Tiberius and Billson (1991) explain the connection in this way:

> Teaching is inherently interactive because it depends on making connections with an active, growing mind. The relationships between teachers and learners can be viewed as a set of filters, interpretive screens or expectations that determine the effectiveness of interaction between teacher and student. Effective teachers form relationships that are trustful, open and secure, that involve a minimum of control, are cooperative and are conducted in a reciprocal interactive manner. They share control with students and encourage interactions that are determined by mutual agreement. (p. 92)

Barbara Carson (1996) suggests that the impact of instructor/student relationships is a long lasting one. She collected narratives from Rollins alumni as they reflected on the professors they encountered 29-31 years previously. "The single quality the Rollins alumni most frequently associated with effective teachers — more often than brilliance and love of subject and even more often than enthusiasm in the classroom — was a special attitude toward and relationship with students...The message these professors gave to their students was, first of all, that they cared about them...[giving the students] a sense of specific personal attention" (Carson, 1996, p. 14). Most research on instructional effectiveness is limited to end-of-course outcomes; Carson provides evidence that long-term effects may be even more closely tied to variables reflected on IDEA's "Rapport" scale.

It is appropriate to conclude this section of the paper with a quotation from Whitman, who regarded the relationship between teacher and learner as essentially one of human relations. "Teachers bring more than knowledge to the relationship: they are motivators, experts, judges. Teachers and learners share responsibility for learning, and some question whether 'teaching' has occurred if no 'learning' occurred" (Whitman, 1987, p. 1). He encouraged more research to identify the constructive side of "... professional intimacy, self-disclosure and mentoring...[to] determine why and how teacher-student relationships deteriorate and help faculty construct more successful relationships" (Whitman, 1987, p. 3).

Clearly, a wide variety of authorities and an extensive body of research have reached a consensus that rapport is an important element in effective instruction.

Section Two — Are Student Ratings of Rapport Accurate?

Do student ratings of the four IDEA items that constitute the "Rapport" scale provide an accurate assessment of the teacher's relationship with the class? These ratings can be considered as an amalgam of individual teacher- student relationships; they can be expected to vary widely among students not only because of individual differences in personality but also because of differences in opportunity for interacting with the instructor on a one-to-one basis.

But individual interactions with the instructor are not the only source of student ratings. These may also be influenced by the views of others (students, teachers, parents, alumni) whose judgments are not always well informed. As a result, there may be a gap between the perceptions of students and reality. This is especially true when the item to be rated requires a judgment about a relationship or personal issue rather than an objective comment on the curriculum, methods of assessment, or similar impersonal matters.

Two of the IDEA questions of concern in this paper (Items 1 and 20) are of this type. Whether or not the teacher is perceived to "display a personal interest in students and their learning" or to "encourage student-faculty interaction outside of class" often depends on actions initiated by the student. Those who experienced a need for special help but failed to seek assistance from the instructor will rely on something other than personal experience in responding to these items.

Likewise, students may make erroneous interpretations of a teacher's behavior. For example, a teacher whose next class begins in 30 minutes on another campus may be perceived as lacking personal interest in students because he/she does not entertain end-of-class questions. Such

interpretative mistakes occur in all settings. A dean erroneously concluded that a teacher was ineffective because there was always a line of students outside his office asking for extra help.

Frequently, student judgments, if not direct, are made from information passed on from other students so that stories achieve *reality* through the grapevine. A single instance of helpfulness may create a positive spread of support; conversely, a negative interaction with one student may result in many others rating the teacher poorly. Students may also extrapolate from observations of teacher behaviors other than those they are asked to rate.

For all of these reasons, there may be a less than perfect correspondence between student perceptions and *reality*. Therefore, when negative ratings are made on these items, the concerned instructor needs first to explore whether or not these responses are an accurate reflection of his/her own feelings. Is it true that the teacher lacks "caring" about students and their learning? If there is a gap between the teacher's true positive feelings and the perceptions of students, it is important to explore the reasons for this. Whether accurate or not, student perceptions have an important impact on learning. Therefore, it is in the students' interest for the instructor to find ways to better convey interest in, and support for, students.

Section Three — Improving Performance: Rationale and Strategy

In this section, separate consideration is given to each of the four IDEA questions related to rapport. The purpose is to identify strategies and techniques for improving instruction by addressing shortcomings inferred from low ratings on these items.

IDEA Question #1:   Displayed a personal interest in students and their learning

In this section I am not advocating a charade where the teacher feigns an interest in students that is not sincere. Students will quickly discern. I am suggesting that the teacher uses strategies that encourage students to see the teacher as personally interested. A teacher who encourages students to take a personal interest in other students may lead students to an enhanced perception of the teacher. Angelo (1996) writes about this interaction in this way. "The monumental analytical summary of twenty years of higher education research done by Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) identified several variables affecting the quality and quantity of learning in college. The number one explanatory variable is the quality of and quantity of student academic effort. Number two is usually students' interactions with other students about their academic work...So the third — or sometimes second — most important variable is students' interactions with teachers about their academic work" (p. 60). This view is supported by Chickering and Gamson's 1987 work, *Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education*. Three of their practices (shown in italics) directly link to our four IDEA questions.

Encourages student-faculty contact
Encourages cooperation among students
Encourages active learning
Gives prompt feedback
Emphasizes time on task
Communicates high expectations
Respects diverse talents and ways of learning

Strategies to Take an Interest in Students' Learning

Nancy Chism (1999) listed five strategies to create a welcoming climate:

- Display authentic concern for students and avoid patronizing behaviors;
- Attend to terminology preferences of social groups by reading and listening to discussions as well as asking directly;
- State explicitly that diversity is valued in the classroom and deal promptly with biased student comments rather than ignore them;
- Personalize the classroom interactions as much as possible by engaging in informal discussions before class, using students' names and encouraging students to visit during office hours;
- Enrich course content by drawing on perspectives, examples and references that reflect the fullness of human inquiry. (p. 137)

Another strategy is to collect data about students' prior knowledge described effectively as *knowledge probes* in Cross and Angelo (1993) and Nufer (1993). Students do not come with an empty mental slate; they have existing frameworks waiting to attach new knowledge. As David Ausubel (1968) wrote, "The most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows. Ascertain this and teach him (sic) accordingly" (p 163). There is a growing body of research stressing the important role that prior knowledge plays in learning; "... our task in teaching is to help students reorganize existing structures or to add new dimensions or new features to existing structures" (McKeachie, 1999, p. 78).

For an interesting case study where a Lincoln University teacher gave students a test on key terms on the first day of class, see Wratten and Hodge (1999) where capturing students' questions at the beginning of the semester also provided an interesting way to re-design the curriculum around student needs. Teachers who seek this prior knowledge are clearly taking a very direct interest in the students. If they expose what students already know, they will have more success in attaching new knowledge to the schematic frameworks that students bring to class.

We connect and maintain knowledge not by examining the world but by negotiating with one another in

communities of knowledgeable peers. Knowledge is therefore not universal and absolute. It is local and historically changing. We construct it and reconstruct it, time after time and build it up in layers. (Bruffee, 1995, p. 12)

Maybe a short and easy test that affirms that the students know something is helpful. Humphreys (1988) suggested that if students experience success as early as possible in a course they become motivated and look forward to further explorations of the material.

There are other and direct ways to demonstrate to students that taking a personal interest in them is beneficial. Maybe the most powerful influence will be the teacher as a model. The teacher listening to student's stories or examples in a sensitive way can be a model as can learning their names and respecting their privacy. Teachers who model respectful silence while their students are speaking are making a positive contribution. Interrupting would produce a negative view.

In the first few days with a new class the teacher can show an interest in students' learning by administering some form of learning styles inventory followed by a discussion about how students learn (Fleming, 2003). Students are seldom asked about their learning yet they respect those who ask. Afterwards, there may be some benefit in grouping students with similar strategies for learning; at least for a brief discussion on such learning tasks as:

- note-taking
- note-making
- recalling important information
- making decisions about their studies
- adjusting to the styles of different teachers (anonymous, of course)
- learning new or different terminology
- using textbooks
- studying for tests
- choosing courses, majors, or careers
- juggling workload with other priorities

This strategy raises the students' level of interest in the course and the teacher because it shows genuine concern about their learning.

The teachers' non-verbal behaviors will be making an impact from the first few minutes of the first class so it is important that the encouragement mentioned in IDEA Question 1 begins very early in the teaching sessions. Wilbur McKeachie (1997) stated that students make their decisions about the qualities of the teacher within two hours of contact so it is important to start well. Beginning as one would intend to continue is important and protects students from inconsistent behavior. One should signal the practices that will be used later. For example student discussion needs to begin in one of the first three sessions. Rescheduling the somewhat boring

"administrivia" that often occurs on Day One would also be an advantage.

An expectations quiz is another direct way to enhance the teaching attribute in IDEA Question 1. Here the teacher seeks information about the students' learning, workload, and other aspects that may otherwise lie hidden for the semester. This strategy indicates the human face of teaching and the data gathered may be useful for planning the remainder of the course. An example of the questions that might form part of an expectations quiz is shown below.

Expectations Quiz

- What prompted you to take this subject?
- What previous courses/experiences have you had in this subject/discipline?
- What knowledge do you expect to learn in this course?
- What skills do you want to gain from this course?
- Of the [insert number] sessions, how many do you expect to attend?
- How do you learn best: Formal lectures, set readings, individual assignments, small group discussions, practical experiences, videos, textbooks, group projects, whole-class discussions, PowerPoint notes...
- What things might get in the way of your passing this course at the level you hope for? Your own ability, ill health, part-time work, fulltime work, family commitments, lack of self-motivation, poor study habits, I don't know how to learn, inadequate writing skills, shyness, reading difficulties, no access to a library or computer...
- I expect to get a grade/mark of _____.
- I am also studying for these papers...
- My workload at present is high/low/normal for this time of the year.
- I expect the workload in this course will be greater/smaller than other courses I have taken.

IDEA Question #2:   Found ways to help students answer their own questions

Finding ways to help students answer their questions is assisted by teachers who use questioning techniques aimed at increasing student independence. Some would extend this to the more global goal of life-long learning where we learn to answer our own questions because there may be no teacher present! Bruner, as quoted in Ramsden (1992, p.100), has this statement: "Instruction is a provisional state that has as its object to make the learner or problem solver self-sufficient."

Answering students' questions on every occasion may seem appropriate but it can indicate a teacher-knows-all approach and build dependency on the teacher as the authority. Such a perception is not helpful when the student leaves college and does not have the support or access to *"the authority."* It may seem contrary to intuition,

but teachers should avoid giving in to students' pleas for *"the answer"* to every problem.

Strategies to Help Students Answer Their Own Questions
The questioning techniques that will be helpful are really scripts that a skilled teacher learns to use at the appropriate time.

Strategies to Extend Student Thinking

- Remember "Wait time I and II." Provide at least three seconds of thinking time after a question and after a response.
- Utilize "think-pair-share." Allow individual thinking time, discussion with a partner, and then open it up for class discussion.
- Ask "follow-ups." Why? Do you agree? Can you elaborate? Tell me more. Can you give an example?
- Withhold judgment. Respond to student answers in a non-evaluative way.
- Ask for a summary (to promote active listening). "Could you please summarize John's point?"
- Survey the class. "How many people agree with the author's point of view?" (Thumbs up. Thumbs down.)
- Allow for student selection. "Richard, will you please call on someone else to respond?"
- Play devil's advocate. Require students to defend their reasoning against different points of view.
- Ask students to "unpack their thinking" (think aloud). "Describe how you arrived at your answer."
- Call on students randomly. Not just those with raised hands.
- Student-to-student questioning. Let the students develop their own questions including test questions.
- Cue student responses. "There is not a single correct answer for this question. I want you to consider alternatives."
- Warn students that a question is coming so they can turn on their critical faculties rather than their pens.

The teacher who uses these strategies is turning questions back to the whole class and encouraging student independence in learning. Teachers can also use students to design questions. Students do this well — especially multiple-choice questions — because they know the wrong answers better than the teacher! An allied skill is to elicit questions from the class using either oral cues or written ones such as the One Minute Paper and Prior Knowledge Probes (Cross and Angelo, 1993). Students have various preferences for the ways in which they might choose to respond with questions so emails, discussion, and opportunities for written questions should be encouraged.

IDEA Question #7: Explained the reasons for criticisms of students' academic performance
This strategy raises some of the finer points about feedback, either oral or written. It goes further than suggesting that

feedback is important because it focuses on reasons for criticisms embodied in any feedback on academic performance. There is no substitute for using varied feedback frequently and it needs to be prompt with as little gap between the event and the feedback as possible. Providing oral or written comments some weeks after the students have completed their work is counter-productive. In some cases the students may not recall to what the feedback refers. Prompt feedback means being prompt with assessment and also prompt with requests and questions sent by email or asked at the end of class. Some research on feedback in general is appropriate here.

> Of all the facets of good teaching that are important to students, feedback on assessed work is the most commonly mentioned. It is significant that the most salient question — the one that differentiated most effectively between the best and the worst courses — in the Australian teaching performance indicator study was concerned with the quality of feedback on students' progress. (Ramsden, 2003, p.96)

Barbara Davis (1993) cites Cashin's (1979) work about feedback.

> Be specific when giving negative feedback. Negative feedback is very powerful and can lead to a negative class atmosphere. Whenever you identify a student's weakness make it clear that your comments relate to a particular task or performance, not to the student as a person. Try to cushion negative comments with a compliment about aspects of the task in which the student succeeded. (Davis, 1993, p. 198-199)

Whitman (1987), writing about reducing stress, said that feedback is information about current performance that can be used to improve future performance. "When given properly, feedback can encourage positive stress that motivates students to action and can discourage the negative stress that inhibits action" (Whitman, 1987, p. 1). Sadler (1999) made this point: "Even though the student's original text and the teacher's criticism are placed before the student together, the meaning and significance of the feedback may not be apparent to the student" (p. 97). The student is provided with nothing that will guide improvement. "Students should be given appropriate exemplars or the opportunity and incentive to rework and resubmit papers with continuous rather than single-shot access to evaluative feedback" (Sadler, 1999, p.97).

McKeachie (1997) wrote:

> Feedback, for example, does not correlate particularly well with student achievement...but we know that feedback can have unintended effects depending upon the context and the students' attributions. Criticism, for example, may be taken by a student as evidence that he or she lacks the ability to succeed, or it may be interpreted as evidence that the teacher thinks that

one has the ability to improve. Thus the kind of feedback and the previous relationship between the teacher and the student may determine whether the feedback produces a reduction in motivation or increased motivation. (p. 405-406)

The issues of fairness and favoritism are also important in the context of IDEA Question 7. The Canadian Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education designed through their prestigious teachers (3M Fellows) a paper called *Ethical Principles in University Teaching*, (Murray, et al, 1996). One of those principles (Number 3) dealt with sensitive topics, which had as its second title "Topics that students are likely to find sensitive or discomforting are dealt with in an open, honest and positive way." Their Fifth Principle called *Dual Relationships with Students* was described as "to avoid conflict of interest a teacher does not enter into a dual role relationship with students that is likely to detract from student development or lead to actual or perceived favoritism on the part of the teacher." In her article entitled *Institutional Commitment to Fairness in College Teaching*, Rita Rodabaugh (1996) examined the role of fairness. She claimed that it was a pre-eminent objective of the educational process with dire consequence for students if it was ignored. Lack of fairness was related to poor achievement, to attrition and even to campus vandalism while maintaining fairness increased satisfaction with the institution and student achievement. Under the heading *procedural fairness* she describes some of the desirable processes; returning a test promptly so that students can see what they have missed and asking pertinent questions so that the test becomes a teaching and learning tool requires only a small investment of time. This point should be made again; that being fair and being seen to be fair are points of difference to students.

Strategies to Enhance Feedback
Students may take little notice of the helpful comments made by teachers on their assignments or by email feedback. Assignments can often be found in trash bins soon after the student has recorded the grade they were assigned. This behavior is common where the assignment has no formative purpose and the event is "over" when it is graded. From a student viewpoint there may be nothing more that can be gained from the task once it is graded. An obvious strategy is to allow students to improve their grade in some way by encouraging resubmission as in mastery and competency testing. These allow students to use assessment as a chance to improve.

Whitman (1987) emphasized that having a personal sense of control is an important factor in reducing student stress. When students do not know what to expect in their courses they feel out of control. Having a visible set of assessment criteria is an important strategy to use to enhance the students' feelings of control. Students deserve to know *"where the marks lie"* so that they can focus on the main point of any assessment and not get lost in irrelevant

detail. There are numerous rubrics available for those who want to redesign their criteria and enhance learning rather than grade-chasing.

As well as avoiding demeaning comments on student efforts it is necessary to avoid the patterned response (positive-negative-positive - PNP) so typical in much feedback. In a PNP response the teacher makes some global comments about a student's work as being *"good"* or *"well done"* and follows with some detailed criticism. Lastly the teacher, in a desire to keep the relationship friendly, ends with some more global and positive comments such as *"Overall, I liked it"* or *"It is really quite a good attempt."* Psychologists tell us that such patterned criticism is less effective because the listener does not *"hear"* the two positive statements and focuses unduly on the negative ones. Varying the pattern might lead to better hearing!

Feedback has a much wider context than assessment, as we shall read in the next section.

IDEA Question #20: Encouraged student-faculty interaction outside of class (office visits, phone calls, e-mail, etc.)
As an introduction to this section, Carson (1996) has some appropriate quotations.

Stanford Ericksen	*Students learn what they care about...*
Goethe	*In all things we learn only from those we love.*
Emerson	*The secret of education lies in respecting the pupil.*

Terenzini and Pascarella (1994) wrote in their Myth Number 4: *Faculty members influence students' learning only in the classroom*. This was not supported by their research.

What a host of studies demonstrate is that faculty exert much influence in their out-of-class (as well as in-class) contacts with students...85 percent of a student's waking hours are spent *outside* a classroom...What the research tells us is that a large part of the impact of college is determined by the extent and content of students' interactions with the major agents of socialization on campus: faculty members and student peers. Further, faculty members' educational influence appears to be significantly enhanced when their contacts with students extend *beyond* the formal classroom to informal non-classroom settings...Some faculty members consider informal, out-of-class contact with students to be "coddling" or (worse) irrelevant or inappropriate to the role of a faculty member. Such views reflect, at best, little knowledge of effective educational practices and of how students learn, and, at worst, a callous disregard. (Terenzini and Pascarella, 1994, p. 31)

"...Teaching simply cannot happen without teachers entering into a relation with their students" wrote Richard Tiberius in *Essays on Teaching Excellence* (1993, p. 1) for The POD Network in Higher Education. "Relationships are as essential to teaching as the flour in a cake" (p.1). In addition, Richard Light's studies at Harvard University concluded that a personal connection between teacher and student might, in fact, be the single most important avenue to student growth and to students' satisfaction with their education. And McKeachie (1997) stated, "interaction of students and teachers increases the opportunity for students to feel a greater sense of personal control — an important motivational variable both in increasing the students self-efficacy and expectancy of success and also affecting attributions of success to one's own ability and effort rather than to external causes" (p. 406).

Strategies Used to Encourage Student-Faculty Interaction
Office hours are a worldwide phenomenon understood by students. Many students see it as their right to have access to the teacher at a convenient time and those teachers who have an *open door anytime* policy are often compared more favorably with those who have reduced access. Email has allowed students to raise questions with teachers outside classroom hours but there are still students who prefer the face-to-face discussion so that they can benefit from the total communication that includes non-verbal language clues. According to Butland and Beebe (1992), as cited in Sensenbaugh (1995), *"teacher immediacy"* in, and outside, the classroom is perhaps the most salient research variable to emerge in instructional communication research in the past two decades. In their list they have verbal and non-verbal communications such as smiles, head nods, use of inclusive language and eye contact.

Murray (1985) studied teacher behavior factors and their highest loading behaviors for teacher effectiveness, most of which align with our topic. In a subscale titled "interaction" he listed five strategies:

• *Addresses students by name.*
• *Encourages questions and comments.*
• *Talks with students after class.*
• *Praises students for good ideas.*
• *Asks questions of the class.*

For the subscale titled *"rapport"* he listed:
• *Friendly, easy to talk to.*
• *Shows concern for student progress.*
• *Offers to help students with problems.*
• *Tolerant of other viewpoints.*

Lowman's observation (1990) of master teachers, endorsed a high degree of interpersonal rapport with students using these techniques:

• *Interest in students as individuals even in large groups.*
• *Sensitivity to student responses.*

• *Encouraging students to join in rule setting — say with due dates on assignments.*
• *Encouraging questions.*
• *Encouraging risk taking and creativity.*

In her book, Barbara Davis (1993) has a number of suggestions for, *"personalizing the large lecture class"* including:

• *Make an attempt to meet informally with students.*
• *Learn their names.*
• *Ask students for autobiographical data.*
• *Help the students forge a common identity as "the class."*

In a similar list, Whitman (1987) said that to improve their relationship with students and enhance students' learning, teachers can:

• Provide structure at the onset of a course.
• Encourage class participation.
• *Get to know students by name.*
• Mobilize student tutors and study groups.
• Use appropriate humor and personal stories.
• *Be "professionally intimate."*
• *Be accessible outside of class.*
• *Develop advising skills.*
• *Be open to the role of mentor.*

Those in italics are particularly appropriate to this paper.

Section Four — Conclusion
The four questions with which we began this paper do not lend themselves easily to strategies for improved teaching and learning. They are somewhat oblique to the task, though that does not diminish their importance. And there are pitfalls. Setting out to win students' approval is as dangerous as ignoring them. Teachers who have an easy and communicative manner with others will find no need to adjust anything, while those who do not may not be conscious of the effects they are causing. There are strategies that can make a difference. They tend to be related closely to personality dimensions and are therefore in need of consciousness raising and persistence if they are to be modified in any way. Maybe becoming aware that one's relationship with students is poor has to precede any change or attempt to modify behaviors. Rapport building between teacher and learner is not in the top category for factors loading onto a statistical explanation of effective teaching (from student evaluation data) but in a wider range of research literature it is an important and acknowledged attribute for enhancing learning and it makes intuitive good sense. Dr. Murray Banks, popular psychologist in the 1960s, in an album titled *What to do until the psychiatrist comes*, said that happiness was like a butterfly. Chase it and it will elude you; stand quietly and it may settle on your shoulder. The same could be said for seeking student approval.

Neil Fleming is avoiding retirement and adding to his forty years of teaching by facilitating faculty development workshops on teaching and learning. He is regularly invited to North American colleges and universities for his wide-ranging list of workshop topics and conference presentations. The Caribbean, Malaysia, Thailand, UK, Australia, Turkey and the South Pacific Islands have also used his expertise in teaching and learning. He has previously taught in teacher education and high schools and from 1987-1998 headed the faculty development center at Lincoln University, New Zealand. 55 Strategies for Teaching is his most recent book and he is known for the VARK learning styles questionnaire and its associated resources. These, and information on his availability for workshops, can be found at www.vark-learn.com.

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