



# Engaging Students in their Learning

## **What is Inquiry-Guided Learning?**

At the heart of the Top 25 course redesign project is inquiry-guided learning. Inquiry-guided learning has been defined as “an array of classroom practices that promote student learning through guided and, increasingly, independent investigation of complex questions and problems, often for which there is no single answer.”<sup>1</sup> Inquiry learning emphasizes active engagement with the subject matter in a way that challenges students to seek answers on their own or with their peers. Teaching using an inquiry approach requires a scaffolding that provides ample support for students at the beginning stages of exploration, then gradually removes support as students become more adept at independent discovery.

## **Thoughts about Inquiry Learning at Miami**

Top 25 team leaders have discussed inquiry learning at some length and have offered their own perspectives:

“It switches the educational focus from looking at what teachers are doing *to* students to what teachers are doing *with* students and what students are doing with each other and the world around them.” *Marjorie Nadler, COM 135*

“Viewing the landscape of knowledge as a series of problems to be solved or questions to be answered or meanings to be deciphered, rather than simply responding to the landscape as recorders of information (the old paradigm) seems to be central to inquiry-based learning.” *Liz Mullenix, THE 191*

“Implementation of the learning/discovery paradigm should be grounded in our understanding of students’ intellectual development in order that students are prepared for the types of activities in which they will be engaged...” *Len Mark, PSY 111*

“Inquiry to me is simply instilling in our students the desire to know more and to gain this ‘more’ through experiential based exercises.” *Skip Benamati, MIS 235*

## **Why is Inquiry-Guided Learning the Model for Top 25 Courses?**

Inquiry learning encourages students to learn at deeper levels, to begin to develop skills for life-long learning, and to retain knowledge more effectively. Research indicates that after two weeks, students tend to remember 20% of what they hear, 70% of what they say, and 90% of what they say and do.<sup>2</sup>

## **Operationalizing Inquiry-Guided Learning in Top 25 Courses**

How have Top 25 teams revised their large enrollment courses to put students at the center of their own learning? Marketing 291, traditionally a lecture course, has been redesigned to put the initial content learning outside of the classroom. Online lectures by Marketing faculty are accompanied by PowerPoints highlighting the lecture content. Questions, problem sets and cases allow students additional interaction with the material outside of class. Students are asked to generate questions based on these activities. In-class time is spent discussing student questions, analyzing the cases read outside of class and working in teams on marketing simulations and major papers such as corporate audits or marketing plans. Students in MKT 291 now spend more time outside of class learning background material and more time in class applying what they have learned in real life case discussions and simulations with their peers. The discussion of questions in class provides the support students need to address the challenges presented in the simulations and major papers. *Team members: David Rosenthal, Donald Hoffer, Maria Cronley*

The Theatre 191 team has implemented inquiry learning using approaches more relevant to their discipline. A once-a-week master class is taught by a lead professor. Breakout sessions give students the opportunity to apply lecture material by writing, producing and performing their own 10-minute play. The third component of the class allows students to have direct contact with theatre through a shadowing experience. Students have a variety of shadowing options, including attending a rehearsal, following a stage manager or sitting in on a production meeting. As in MKT 291, class time is no longer the first encounter with material, but is devoted to student exploration and application of course concepts. The course is designed to provide the needed support through the lead professor and breakout instructors, while allowing for discovery learning by creating an original work. *Team members: Liz Mullenix, Julia Guichard, Bill Doan, Steve Pauna, Gion DeFrancesco, Mike McVey, Bekka Eaton*

<sup>1</sup>Lee, Virginia S. (ed.) *Teaching and Learning Through Inquiry: A Guidebook for Institutions and Instructors*. Stylus Publishing, Sterling, VA, 2004

<sup>2</sup>[http://courses.science.fau.edu/~rjordan/active\\_learning.htm](http://courses.science.fau.edu/~rjordan/active_learning.htm)