

SMC ETHICS

Continuing a Dialogue on What We Do and How We Do It

Optional Vs. Required

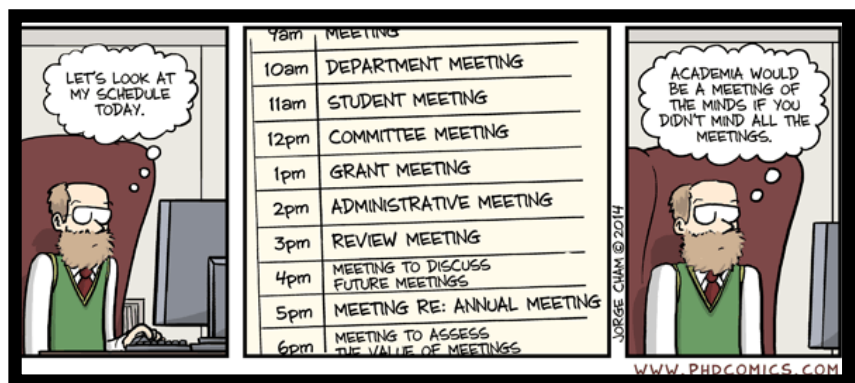
As employees of the college, there are many things that we are *required* to do in our classrooms, include in our syllabi, and participate in for our departments. There are even more *optional* things that we can do in all of those contexts.

But when looked at from an equity, student-centered lens, you may find that many of those supposedly optional items are actually required for real student success.

Although we are already hard-pressed for time and space in our classrooms, class materials, and professional commitments, being open and dedicated to incorporating more of these items and practices can make a real difference.

This might mean devoting precious class time to letting counselors make a presentation on student wellness. Or it might mean adding sections into your syllabus about emotional support, gender expression, and support for undocumented/DACA students. It could be taking the time to make students aware of what is available in

Walking the Path Together



CartCarton

Cartoon by Jorge Cham

The SMC Guided Pathways Redesign is happening. Our students can already see the changes on the campus website, where they may explore an Area of Interest and visit newly revamped department homepages with information on degrees/certificates and career options with live job postings. But as it continues to progress, the redesign is going to go beyond sorting majors into buckets and tinkering with webpages. Much more is going to be asked of us as teachers, department members, and colleagues as we continue down this yellow brick road.

Although it may seem daunting, the scale and scope of the redesign effort is actually an opportunity to reflect on what we do on every level and to shake up the habits and assumptions that we have acquired over the years of teaching our students, running our departments, and guiding the institution. Yes, the redesign effort involves things like placement in areas of interest, development of course maps, and selection of general education

the new Student Services center, or to cover the campus resources for those facing food or housing insecurity. Choosing free online resources at the start of the semester while students are waiting for their financial aid checks, or being flexible when your veteran students have to miss class for a hard-to-schedule medical appointment would be other examples.

There is always so much more we can do to help our students succeed, so why not start now in embracing more of these “options”?

CONTACT US!

[PERC website](#)

[email](#)

of general education requirements. But it also can mean rethinking our class scheduling practices in light of our students’ lives, or finally making that leap to free Open Educational Resources (OER) to cut student costs. It can mean adopting some of those equity-promoting practices that may seem counterintuitive or risky. Or instead of defending our academic territory, the redesign can be a chance to invite others into that territory or to create more innovative courses.

During this time of change, we might be afraid of how the redesign will impact our departments or careers, taking a defensive approach that does its best to maintain the status quo. We might even be tempted to cynically dismiss the entire effort as yet another academic fad promising a ‘revolution’ in higher learning, and thereby contribute just a bare minimum on our part. Let us instead view the redesign as a chance to support each other as we ambitiously make SMC an even better educational institution.

Many of us pride ourselves on our innovation in teaching and disruption of students’ established ideas. It is time to take that creative openness to change beyond the classroom and to the institution. Throughout, we should always remember that the redesign’s goals are to reduce/eliminate the equity gaps and increase the rate of our students successfully completing a college degree. In other words, student success achieved through concrete efforts is what it is all about. As educators serving the community, we owe it to our students to professionally and pedagogically give it our all. We still have a long way to go down that path, but we must be sure we remain willing to have courageous conversations as we walk that path together.