## Teaching Innovation Learning Lab

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# TILL TALK

the newsletter

**Dear Friends of the TILL,**

In this edition of **TILL Talk**, we explore **3 strategies** that faculty can employ to help increase **student retention**. From creating opportunities for classroom connections to enhancing the structure of a course, small changes in teaching practices significantly increase the number of students who choose to stay at UofL. Student retention is a key goal for the university for this and upcoming years.

We also invite applications for the annual **TILL Teaching Innovation Award**, with more information in the second half of this edition.

## TEACHING INNOVATION

# 3 Instruction Strategies to Increase Student Retention

Faculty are key in keeping students at the University of Louisville. Here are three steps you can take to help in UofL's **Year of Retention**.

1. **Promote student belongingness by creating opportunities for faculty-to-student and student-to-student connections**
   When students feel like they belong at the University of Louisville, they are more likely to stay. Faculty can increase students' development of a sense of belonging by incorporating opportunities for relationship-building in their courses. Student-faculty interactions significantly increase a student's desire to stay in college (Lillis, 2011; O'Keeffe, 2013). Further, using students' names, creating class conversations around values, and implementing interactive learning activities can all help students feel more connected.

2. **Make courses more inclusive by providing a high level of structure**
   Students come to UofL with a wide range of backgrounds, talents and academic experiences. When faculty provide detailed structure around their course assignments and activities, more students will engage and learn effectively. Providing more structure helps those who need it and doesn't harm those who do not.

   Research from Viji Sathy and Kelly Hogan's article "**How to Make Your Teaching More Inclusive**," as published in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, shows many positive changes result from increasing structures around course work, including narrowed achievement gaps between students and increased student interest. Sathy and Hogan's work was the interactive featured workshop at the Celebration of Teaching and Learning conference. Additional materials from 2023's Celebration of Teaching and Learning conference can be found **here**.

3. **Promote university support services to students**
   While academics are the cornerstone of the university, they are just one piece of a student's broader experience. Higher ed institutions are most successful at increasing student retention when they have an integrated approach to academics and student affairs (Aljohani, 2016; Hossler et al, 2009). Faculty can help connect students in crisis to appropriate campus support services through the **UofL Concern Center.** Staff in the Dean of Students office follow up on all submitted concerns to help students receive what they need.

## Upcoming Opportunity

# Nominate Yourself or a Colleague for the 2023 TILL Innovation Teaching Award

The Teaching Innovation Learning Lab is pleased to invite nominations for the 2023 TILL Teaching Innovation Award. This annual award honors the University of Louisville's outstanding faculty who demonstrate a commitment to student engagement and learning through their work on one or more innovative teaching practices.

The award recognizes the importance of teaching excellence among UofL faculty and offers individual recognition to instructors who explore new methods for fostering learning and improving teaching. Award winners will each receive a $1,000 cash reward and be invited to share their work at the 2024 Celebration of Teaching and Learning conference. Award winners may be self-nominated or nominated by their peers.

**Award applications are due by Friday, March 17.**
Submit an application **here**.

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