What is Active Learning?

There are about as many definitions of active learning as there are faculty utilizing it. A good starting point is to view active learning as a process whereby students engage in activities, such as reading, writing, discussion, or problem solving, that promote analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of class content.

Active learning can take many forms, including:

- Cooperative Learning
- Problem-based Learning
- Case Methods
- Simulations
- Peer Instruction
- Group Discussion
- Self-Assessment
- Think-Pair-Share
- Brainstorming
- Writing
- Role Playing

Benefits of Active Learning

Research has shown that active learning, when compared to individualistic learning, improves academic achievement, the quality of interpersonal interactions, self-esteem, and perceptions of greater social support.


What is an Active Learning Classroom?

Fully realized active learning classroom are typically designed around a few core priorities:

- Collaboration: Clustered seating and tables allow students to form groups to problem-solve, compare notes, and more.
- Flexibility: Rather than orientating towards one side of the room, active learning room furniture is often designed for multiple configurations and orientations depending on the needs of each course. Instructor stations are often at the center of the room, to allow quick access and good sightlines to all students.
- Flow: Classroom layout account for enough space to allow instructors and students to easily move around the room.
- Workspace: Whiteboards, monitors, and large table surfaces enable to students to get down to work.

Supplies and Technology

The use of props, games, workspace or technology is often used – but by no means required – in active learning environments. Some courses might use 3D models to help students understand chemical compounds. Students might draw out logic models on whiteboards. Students working on reports might gather around a laptop and display monitor. Current UAA designs seek to maximize workspace by including large areas for groups to work on whiteboards. At the same time, Digital Classroom Services is researching and testing presentation technology that would all students to send images from mobile devices to monitors dedicated to each group. Designs also seek to provide ways for instructors to send their content or students’ content to breakout monitors or main projector screens.
Active Learning Classroom at Rutgers
There are currently no Active Learning General-Purpose Classroom (AL-GPC) at Rutgers-New Brunswick. Work is beginning on the first AL-GPC room in Tillett Hall Room 204 (Livingston Campus). This 54 seat room will serve as a pilot room to test and inform the design of two 90 seat Active Learning Classrooms in the new Rutgers Academic Building (College Ave), to open for the Fall of 2016 semester.

What is the Active Learning Community?
The Active Learning Community is a way for faculty engaged in or interested in active learning to connect with support staff and each other. It puts faculty in contact with those who support their teaching, the planners who design learning spaces, and other faculty developing active learning techniques. It is a means to help everyone involved use, support, and design active learning spaces. The Active Learning Community will be shaped by those who participate in it. To start the discussion, we have imagined various potential pieces that could come together to form the elements of a community:

• **Boot Camp:** A gathering to catalyze the use of active learning spaces that includes information on, and discussions about, different active learning techniques, curriculum design workshops, technology training, and more.
• **Workshops:** Regular gatherings of community members to share experiences, pose questions, develop active learning methods, discuss learning space improvements, and more.
• **Learning Assistants:** Students who are assigned to classes in active learning spaces to help facilitate active and collaborative learning exercises.
• **Fellows:** Graduate students paired with faculty members to help design courses, conduct class meetings, assess the effectiveness of active learning techniques, and disseminate findings and experiences.
• **Peer Mentors:** Faculty members experienced in active learning who provide advice and informal support to other instructors who are trying these methods for the first time.
• **Symposium:** An annual event focused on all things active learning that could include guest experts on active learning and faculty presentations summarizing their courses here at Rutgers.

Who Can Join?
Any faculty or staff interested in active learning teaching is invited to join the community. Simply email Chris, Dave, or Mary to be included in future correspondences of the community.

How can I schedule my course in an Active Learning Classroom?
To let us know who is interested in using active learning rooms, fill out a Course Information Form. Knowing a little bit about your course and how you would like to use the room will help properly connect courses with the different available classroom spaces.

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**Important Info**

**Web page:** https://dcs.rutgers.edu/active-learning

**Contact Info**

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