

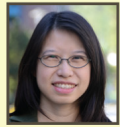
## Our Team



**PETER ARTHUR, Ph.D.**  
*Director*  
250.807.9207 | SCI 200B  
peter.arthur@ubc.ca



**JANINE HIRTZ, M.A. (Education)**  
*e-Learning Instructional Support Specialist*  
250.807.9133 | SCI 200E  
janine.hirtz@ubc.ca



**VANIA CHAN, M.A. (Candidate)**  
*e-Learning Instructional Support Specialist*  
250.807.9408 | SCI 200D  
vania.chan@ubc.ca



**HEATHER HURREN, M.Ed.**  
*Manager, Academic Development*  
250.807.9288 | SCI 200C  
heather.hurren@ubc.ca



**LYNNE MCPHERSON**  
*Communication & Teaching Evaluation Coordinator*  
250-807-8845 | SCI 263  
lynne.mcpherson@ubc.ca



**JOHN PARRY, M.Ed.**  
*Coordinator, Graduate & Teaching Assistant Program*  
250.807.9316 | SCI 259  
john.parry@ubc.ca



**TRICIA LALLI, B.A.**  
*Centre for Teaching & Learning Support*  
250.807.9293 | SCI 200  
tricia.lalli@ubc.ca

[www.ubc.ca/okanagan/ctl](http://www.ubc.ca/okanagan/ctl)



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THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

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## Centre for Teaching and Learning

**Tools  
For  
Excellence**

# Learning Student Names

Many effective professors agree that the learning of student names is an important aspect of creating a sense of community and trust in a class. Research supports this claim; in reviewing the literature on teaching in higher education, Alexander Austin in *What Matters in College*, reported that learning student names fostered both faculty/student and student/student interaction, both factors that greatly enhanced the undergraduate learning experience.

A professor who learns student names is one who appears approachable and inclusive. The interaction is perceived to be a personal, interested, and engaging one. In large classes, learning names may be daunting but even if a few names are known and used it gives the impression that the professor cares and is concerned about the success of the students.

So how do we go about learning names?

1. Give each student a 5x8 card, which they will fold in half lengthwise and write their first name on in large letters. They bring it to class each day for the first couple of weeks and set them up on their desk as a name tag.

2. Before coming to class, read the class roster several times. Some instructors prefer to concentrate on last names and add the Mr. or Ms. thus eliminating the need to remember two names. Others concentrate on first names only. This is good for the semester but may make the grading process and the writing of references more demanding.
3. The University has class lists on which a photo is included. Professors can obtain these through their departments. The thumbnails are rather small and the files are in PDF format. Converting them to a word document (<http://www.pdfonline.com/pdf-to-word-converter/>) allows one to enlarge the photos.
4. Use student names every chance you have, ask them to correct you if you are wrong. If you don't know a name, it's fine to ask the student when you call on them ("Remind me of your name. . . OK, John, what did you discover?").
5. By using a small group activity frequently during the first few classes one can circulate and match names with faces.
6. Having the students complete a 'Passport' in which they include a photo, some interesting history, a note on their goal in life and a unique fact, (I was captain of the roller derby team). The passports will provide an excellent resource to associate each student with name and interests.
7. Develop a rough seating chart. It is usual for students to return to the same seat that they sit in during the first class. By having a large chart in front of you and using #1 suggestion professors have a constant reference.
8. If you are teaching a large class it is appropriate to ask students to complete a mini passport. A 5x7 card with a photo and their name. Also have them leave some space so that one can add a comment or two. Then request that they always sit in the same place. Thus, even with a class

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- of 100 the instructor can fabricate a frame of reference.
9. Groups of six. Divide the class into groups and have them remain in the same groups for discussions, project work and quizzes. Wander around, participate in the discussions and associate the cards (#1) with the faces. The grouping somehow makes the task more manageable.
10. Have each student introduce themselves to a neighbor. Then have the neighbor introduce their new partner. Stress that they should include a unique trait or fact. After three or four introductions point to one student who has been introduced and challenge other students to recall the name. Also write the names on the board.
11. At the beginning of the first class tell the students that you are leaving for seven minutes and that when you return you will choose four students to introduce five students to you. Some students will do this easily and be able to tell you the names and also some interesting fact, others may struggle. Also ask what strategies they used to learn the names.

There are other techniques, what is important is the professors make substantial efforts to learn names. Point out that this is important to you. It will demonstrate to the students that you care.

### **Centre for Teaching and Learning**

The Centre for Teaching and Learning at UBC's Okanagan campus promotes and supports excellence in teaching and learning . The Centre provides campus-wide support for all models of teaching and learning, including online learning.

#### **It is our Mission:**

*"To lead, support and promote teaching and learning excellence, innovation and scholarship at the UBC Okanagan campus."*