



Facilitator Guide: Utility Value Writing

Process	Description	Your Plan
Transparency	This activity is designed to help students reflect on how the concepts they are encountering in your course are related to other areas of their lives and their goals. The research into utility value writing indicates that when students engage in this practice, especially when they do so at several points over the semester, student engagement, course performance, and retention in STEM increase.	
Connection	This is a great moment for you to share your vision of the larger purpose of your course, or of higher education, with your students. Why are the skills and knowledge areas that you are discovering together important and worthy? And more than that, why do you think that it's important for students to find meaning and connection between what they are learning in class and who they wish to become more broadly?	
Modeling	You may wish to share a personal skill or area of expertise that you are working on in your own research or professional life, and the value that you see that skill having both as you strive for your professional goals and also for other areas of your life. For example, you may be working to improve your research documentation skills; as such, you could share why this skill is important to your research success as well as the lessons you are learning from honing this skill that are	

	infusing other areas of your life as well.	
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Action Steps:

- Ask students to construct a 1-2 page essay responding to the prompts provided below:
 - First, please describe a specific topic, concept, or skill that we covered during this section of the course. What was the concept or skill, and what do you know about it now that you didn't know before this section of the course?
 - How is this issue or skill related to your life or your goals? How will the new understanding be useful to you? Please provide personally-relevant examples.
- Take the time to read through these essays. In addition to providing you with meaningful insights into how you can further strengthen students' connections to the material in the course and their sense of purpose as learners, they are typically inspiring and sometimes surprising!
- If you have time, provide brief but authentic feedback that echoes what you read students' saying as being important and valuable to them. Thank them for sharing these connections with you and encourage them to keep these goals and linkages in mind throughout the semester.
- You could also share anonymized submissions in which students made connections to topics that were challenging for many students in the class other of the essays that you feel could help foster learning of the class in general.

References:

Harackiewicz, J. M., Tibbetts, Y., Canning, E., & Hyde, J. S. (2014). Harnessing Values to Promote Motivation in Education. In S. A. Karabenick & T. C. Urdan (Eds.), *Advances in Motivation and Achievement* (Vol. 18, pp. 71–105). Emerald Group Publishing Limited. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S0749-742320140000018002>