Small Group Teaching and Learning

• In most small groups, everybody teaches and everybody learns (especially the faculty!)
• It's all about participation and group discovery
• More heads and perspectives are much better than one (contrast to lecture)
• All participants bring forth the concepts, issues, and interpretations that are important to them (contrast to lecture)
Small Group Teaching and Learning Terminology

• Problem Based Learning
• Case Based Learning
• Problem Solving Learning
• Small Group Learning
Small Group Teaching and Learning: What small group learning is

• Is a semi-structured learning activity
• Is based on learning expectations, objectives
• Is intended to be fluid
• Is intended to enhance self-directed learning
• Is intended to express multiple competencies
Small Group Teaching and Learning: What small group learning is NOT

• Is not an unstructured conversation
• Is not a forum for mini-lecture
• Is not a place for one-ups-man-ship
• Is not a place to solve interpersonal conflict
• Is not a place to push participants far out of their comfort zone
• Is not a place for condemnation
Small Group Teaching and Learning
Teaching Responsibilities: Faculty

- **Preparation**
- Expectations for the educational outcomes
- Key concept coverage
- Assess individual and group baseline & performance
- Real world experiences and anecdotes
- Participation of all members
- Referee
- Role modeling
- Environment police
- Feedback (give and receive, individual and group)
- Moderator
- Tour guide
Small Group Teaching and Learning
Teaching Responsibilities: **Students**

- **Preparation**
- Participation
- Teach peers
- Bring individual perspectives
- Ask questions to fill gaps
- Moderation of behavior and style
- Sensitivity
- Feedback (give and receive, individual and group)
Small Group Teaching and Learning
Learning Responsibilities: Faculty

- Participant personalities
- Individual baseline and trajectory
- Group baseline and trajectory
- Group dynamics
- New perspectives and applications
- Personal biases, weaknesses, and gaps
- New material
- New interpretations
- New teaching methods and examples
Small Group Teaching and Learning
Learning Responsibilities: **Students**

- New insights from peers
- Self awareness
- Participation styles
- Personality styles
- Personal biases, weaknesses, gaps
- Group skills
- Interpersonal skills
Small Group Teaching and Learning
Conduct of the session

• Introductions (first session only)
• Contact information
• Ground rules
• Session objectives
• Open the discussion
• Moderate, encourage participation as needed
• Add content and insight in small doses
• Avoid over-management
• Invite participation through open ended questions
• Bring discussion to closure
• Identify unresolved issues and objectives
• Seek and give feedback on group performance
• Next session/assignment
• Invite out-of group consultation
Small Group Teaching and Learning
Common Pitfalls

• The “overly Socratic” session
• The “bitch session”
• The “pimp session”
• The “wander in the wilderness” session
• The “get there in a hurry” session
• The “group reference” session
• The “must know it all” session
Small Group Teaching and Learning
Sharpening the saw

- Practice
- Practice
- Practice
- Reflect
- Experiment
- Know thyself – pre-group assessment