

*This new feature in CEE, "Teaching Tips," is intended to be a forum for sharing innovative teaching practices with others in the profession. These short (600 words or less) contributions should clearly state the innovation, summarize the evidence for its success, and offer guidelines for its implementation. Contributions will be reviewed for originality, general interest, and appropriateness. They should be sent to Professor Phillip C. Wankat, Chemical Engineering Department, 480 Stadium Mall Drive, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907-2100, or <wankat@ecn.purdue.edu>.*

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To encourage development of collaboration skills, many classes are split into teams of students to work on projects. Common methods of selecting the team composition are

- 1) To let students form their own groups,
  - 2) To have the instructor assign team members,
- or
- 3) To randomly choose members.

A disadvantage to student-selected groups is that often the better students choose each other and the weakest students end up together; this approach can also hinder achieving racial and gender diversity within a group. Instructor-selection may lead to complaints of favoritism, and random-selection leaves too much to chance and is not a method that would be used in the "real world."

For several years we have used a novel approach for forming teams. We require students to bring a one-page resume to class with them. The students' names are covered with Post-It notes and the resumes are laid out on a table so all can be viewed. "Team selectors" then study them and pick up the resumes of the students to be on their team. They do not know the students' identities at that point and make their selection based solely on the skills displayed in the resume.

The team selectors could be chosen by a random method, but we prefer to have the instructor identify those with the best grades in pre-requisite subjects to

ensure there is at least one strong student per group. These selectors then randomly draw a number from a hat that will serve both as their team number and the order of selection. For example, selector #1 will form team #1 and will pick up the first resume; selector #2 will form team #2 and will have second choice; the last team selector will have last choice, but will immediately select again (*i.e.*, pick up two resumes), and then the selection sequence reverses. This process continues until all the students have been selected and teams of the desired size are formed. Identities are not revealed until all resumes have been picked up, at which point the Post-Its are removed from each resume.

An advantage of this method is that students have taken an active role in forming their team, which is similar to the approach companies use to select job applicants. We take some time to discuss the reasons students had for making their selections. This is an excellent way to illustrate the importance of a good resume.

Many students have never attempted to prepare a resume prior to this requirement, so we provide some suggestions to help them. A good starting point is the "Resume Wizard" in Microsoft Word, which takes a step-by-step approach to creating a resume. Also, most colleges have career centers that provide helpful information on this topic. An added bonus is that the self-analysis needed to construct a resume makes students aware of shortcomings in their skills and experience and provides incentive for them to work on filling those gaps as they progress through their studies.