

LEARNING IN RETIREMENT

Suggestions for Study Group Leaders

Thank you for volunteering your time and talent to lead a *USF* LIR Study Group! Your commitment, enthusiasm, and topic knowledge will ensure that the LIR members have an enjoyable and educational learning experience. We also want you to have an enjoyable and rewarding teaching experience! We have prepared the following list of suggestions that have proven to make our study groups more enjoyable and effective.

Preparing for the Study Group:

- ***Set realistic and basic objectives; remember that less is more.*** You have a limited number of contact hours with your students. Your objective is to familiarize, to challenge current thinking, and to expand horizons. If your topic is very complex, consider narrowing or limiting its scope so that you can cover it in more depth.
- ***Prepare an outline.*** Once you have set objectives, determine how you will accomplish them. What will you cover in your study group? In what sequence will you present your ideas? What methods will you use? Limit your points to the absolutely essential items so that you will have time to discuss them fully.
- ***Consider how you will communicate needed information,*** such as facts or statistics, and how you plan to use audio/visual materials. Are your audio/visual materials the focus of the learning? They are much more effective when used to support or illustrate learning points.
- ***Be flexible about following your outline.*** Sometimes students take you places you didn't expect to go. If you find you are getting sidetracked, ask the group whether they wish to continue down this path or if they would prefer to return to the objectives you have set. Sometimes the unexpected path is very rewarding!
- ***Ask students what their study group objectives are.*** Their answers may surprise you, but it will let you know whether your outline is on the right track.

Managing Study Group Classroom Time:

- ***Establish expectations.*** Let students know how you will conduct your study group and what you expect from them. For example, "I will use about 15 minutes to share some information with you, then we will break into smaller groups to consider some of these issues further."
- ***Allow for break time after each hour of sitting.*** Announce in advance when the breaks are and how long they will last.
- ***Encourage students to do preparatory work (readings, etc.) outside of the study group meeting time.*** Spend study group time discussing students' interpretations of the readings. Adults learn and benefit from actual interaction more than from lecture alone.

Managing Study Group Member Participation:

- ***Allow time for students to share their ideas and comments with the study group.*** The LIR mission states that members are resources for learning. Your audience is intelligent, well educated, and highly experienced.
- ***Control the students who tend to monopolize the discussion.*** Be polite, but direct.
- ***Encourage students who have little to say.*** Sometimes quiet people need just a little bit of encouragement.
- ***No one expects you to have all of the answers!*** Perhaps someone in the study group can help you answer an important question; if not, tell the person asking the question that you will check into it and let them know the answer at the next study group meeting.