Resource Guide

Supporting Active Learning in Large Classes with PowerPoint

While it can be difficult to use active learning in a large lecture hall with fixed seating, there are some simple strategies you can incorporate into your PowerPoint slides to further engage students with content and help you assesse their level of understanding

- **In-Class Writing**: As students come into the room, display a slide asking them to write a few sentences or a paragraph in response to the reading they did outside of class, or about the last lecture. This provides a focusing activity to bring class to order quickly, and allows you to call on anyone in class since they will all have something prepared to say.

- **Note Comparison**: Insert a slide asking students to turn to their neighbors and review the notes they just took on a particular concept or section of your lecture. This is an excellent technique to help students work though a particularly confusing concept.

- **Think / Pair / Share**: Insert a slide asking students work on a problem or formulate an answer to a question you've just discussed. Give them a few minutes to think about it on their own and jot down a few notes or a possible solution. Then ask them to pair with a neighbor to discuss. Close the activity by calling on select groups to share a solution in a full class discussion.

Resources

Active Lecturing: The Potential of PowerPoint. A tutorial from the University of Minnesota. Includes example activity slides you can download and use in your own lectures.
http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/tutorials/powerpoint/index.html

Incorporating Active Learning PowerPoint Based Lectures Using Content Based Questions. This article presents the results of two studies the authors conducted in an effort to assess the impact of an active learning technique on student test scores.
http://top.sagepub.com/content/36/2/134.full.pdf+html

For more information or to discuss how you might incorporate these ideas into your courses, contact the Reinert Center at cttl@slu.edu.