Concept Mapping

Students organize keywords graphically and spot connections between ideas.

Purpose:
- Facilitates discussion
- Focuses attention on a particular point
- Provides quick access to student understanding
- Engages kinesthetic learners

Uses:
- After discussion or explanation of a concept to check understanding
- To check attendance
- To reinforce understanding
- As quick and easy grade collection

Method:
1. Brainstorm ideas and terms related to an important concept you will highlight.
2. Ask students to organize the concepts as a geographical map, or in a flowchart (perhaps by use of sticky notes), or in a diagram as a wheel with spokes.
3. Students write down, along the lines, the nature of the relationships between concepts.

Results:
- When viewing the concept maps, consider both the concepts chosen by the students as well as the relationships which describe them.
- Results can be tabulated by grouping concepts or relationships, with an ensuing discussion about the reasons behind people’s choices

Next Steps:
- Determine appropriate teaching technique responses to results
  - Large percentage had similar concepts identified or similar relationships: use the consistency of response as a discussion point. Is there a preconception/misconception at work here? Can we expand to tertiary associations?
  - Small percentage had similar concepts or relationships: explore areas of overlap and probe reasons for disparity. Why does everyone have different concepts in mind? Are some of the concepts and relationships incorrect?

Future Steps:
- Keep records of results for use with student, course, and program assessments (trends begin with one result!)
- Course or program review:
- Large percentage with misconceptions = strengthening focus of these in previous courses
- Large percentage having no misconceptions = lessening focus or eliminating from course
- Large percentage demonstrating poor understanding = adding concepts or skills to pre- or post- courses for necessary redundancy
- Compare results from classroom assessments of major concepts with certification test results, graduate, and employer surveys and/or accreditation review comments; positive correlation = you are on the right assessment track and the right improvement track