Discussion Questions on Rigor and Engagement

General

1) Does achieving rigor and engagement go hand in hand or can these two objectives compete?
   a. For example, does teaching to the “top level” students (which seems consistent with rigor), alienate many others who seem to fall more in the middle?

2) Does our current curriculum engage students as much as it should? Are there concrete ways to improve engagement during the curriculum redesign currently underway?

3) What is the greatest obstacle (both institutionally and individually) to achieving higher standards for rigor and engagement?

Practical Implications

1) How can class participation be evaluated in a way that is consistent with the goals of rigor and engagement?

2) Most of us agree that focusing more on students’ writing is a key element of the rigor and engagement issue. How can writing assignments be incorporated into larger than average classes? Is there a realistic way to give helpful feedback on writing assignments in classes that have 49 students?

3) What is the best way to structure group presentations in a way that promotes rigor and engagement?

4) Does allowing students to do extra credit assignments foster a culture that is inconsistent with the goal of rigor?

5) One of the obstacles to achieving a high level of rigor and engagement is cheating. Is our current academic honesty policy (and the enforcement of it) sufficient to keep this problem under control?

6) Many of our students seem to begin our courses with preconceived notions about whether they are good at that particular discipline, whether the course will be “impossible” or “easy.” What is the best way to address these, often distorted, expectations?