

## **Working with Students**

If you are developing a survey to measure students' knowledge and/or attitudes, direct conversations with students are absolutely vital. You need to know whether they are really thinking what your survey seems to suggest that they are thinking.

One well-tested technique is the think-aloud, where talk about what they're thinking as they take the survey. Videotapes of these sessions can reveal differences between what students are actually thinking and what we intended to test. Libarkin and Kurziel's columns in JGE cover this topic at some length.

I've involved students in every stage of the development of my survey instrument. Ten students in my fall, 2005, honors class filled out my very first survey and provided feedback. They noticed that the one true/false question made it clear what the correct answer was, and I no longer use any true/false questions. In spring, 2006, I asked 100 students in a large lecture whether this course was required for their major. Most hands in the room went up, because they were taking the course to fulfill a general education requirement for their major. The survey instrument now asks more specifically whether this particular course is a major requirement or fulfills a general education requirement.