I was astonished at how well this business of breaking my large lecture into small groups works. The students got very involved with each other during the weekly “challenges” I introduced. It very quickly became clear to me that almost all my students were able to interact with their peers in ways they could not with me—more vehement discussion, excitement and confrontation....

The week we do dynamics, I challenge the students to predict what will happen when I drop a bowling ball and a little steel marble. The students have learned the two relevant equations, the formula for the force of gravity and \( f = ma \). They can write those down on a piece of paper and cross out the mass. But that doesn’t mean they believe it.

That week it was reported to me that large numbers of students were dropping things off the dormitory balcony. So one of my goals was already achieved. The students were involved in the science, and they were having fun at it, independent of whether they got the right or wrong prediction.

—Douglas Duncan  
Associate Professor of Astronomy  
and Astrophysics  
University of Chicago

For more success stories and innovative examples, visit the Collaborative Learning Website.