



Alliant International University

Center for Teaching and Excellence - Newsletter

August 15, 2022

The [Center for Teaching Excellence](#) monthly newsletter provides information about events sponsored by the CTL as well as around the university and beyond. We also highlight resources available to Alliant faculty on the CTE site and elsewhere. We encourage you to submit possible content of interest to faculty for an upcoming newsletter.

Dalia Ducker

Center for Teaching Excellence Events



Upcoming

On **Friday, September 23, 2022, 12:00-1:30 pm**, **Dr. Sharon Foster** will present a free webinar: **A Practical Guide to Mentoring Doctoral Dissertations and Doctoral Projects**.

Licensed Psychologists will be able to earn 1.5 CE units.

This presentation will draw from available empirical research and will focus on a) common issues that faculty encounter with students in doctoral process, including topic selection, weak student skills, and difficulties with time/project management, and b) ways to prevent and address roadblocks to success. Attendees will be encouraged to share their own experiences, particularly practical strategies they find useful in assisting students and in balancing their own workloads with the demands of individual mentoring.

Dr. Foster is a Professor Emerita at Alliant International University. In addition to teaching Research Design and Psychometrics, she chaired over 50 dissertations and served as a committee member on numerous other Ph.D. and Psy.D. dissertations and doctoral projects as a faculty member of the San Diego Ph.D. Clinical Program. She also served as the San Diego Ph.D. Program Director and as the Associate Provost for Research and Scholarship at Alliant. She is the coauthor of four books, including the APA best seller, *Dissertations and Theses from Start to Finish*, a guide to help students navigate the research process, now in its third edition.

[Click here to register](#)

Other Events



On Demand

[The Faculty's Place in Student Success](#)

During the shift to virtual learning professors gained new insights into their students' lives and the challenges they faced. This panel discussion, sponsored by the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, featured four faculty members/administrators discussing what they are doing to modify their teaching methods, assessment approaches, and course policies to focus more explicitly on supporting student learning. They offered very specific examples of innovations they have introduced as a result of their experiences with both distance learning and the return to the classroom.

Resources on Center for Teaching Excellence site

[Consultations Request Form](#)



If you are interested in a consultation, please fill out this form:



Consultations Request Form

If you are interested in a consultation, please fill out the form below.

Hi, When you submit this form, the owner will see your name and email address.

* Required

1. Name: *

2. Email: *

3. Status: *

Core Faculty

Adjunct Faculty

Other

4. What would you like to discuss? *

5. Other questions or comments:

Submit

[▶ Submit the request form](#)



Gender Inclusive Teaching

Gender inclusive teaching invites “the full participation of students of all genders and respond(s) to the harmful impact of gender stereotyping and misgendering on student learning” [Gender Inclusive Teaching Practices](#). Gender inclusive pedagogy involves implementing inclusive teaching principles in all aspects of a course, including designing a syllabus, developing course content, choosing readings and activities, and establishing class guidelines and culture.

The literature on gender inclusive teaching focuses on the need both to create a safe, supportive, and affirming environment for transgender and gender expansive students and to educate students about gender by integrating gender inclusive materials and practices throughout a course. Following are some suggestions for gender inclusive teaching:

1. Add a gender inclusion statement to your syllabus that makes your commitment to gender inclusivity explicit.
2. Provide opportunities for students to indicate the name and pronouns they would like to use in this class.
3. Don't share students' private information without their consent. Be careful about confidentiality, disclosure, and "outing."
4. Don't ask intrusive questions (i.e., personal questions that you would not ask all students) or allow other students to ask such questions.
5. Do not ask transgender and gender expansive students to represent and speak on behalf of all TGE individuals).
6. Model an inclusive approach to gender
 - a. In class, indicate how you want to be addressed: state your name and pronouns when you introduce yourself.
 - b. Include your pronouns in your syllabus, email signature, Zoom display name, office sign, etc.
 - c. If you are not sure of a person's pronouns, ask. [Pronoun Guide](#)
 - d. Use gender inclusive language (e.g., everyone, students, learners, or authors) and gender neutral pronouns (e.g., they and them) or no pronouns in referring to self or others.
For more information, see the handout developed by Alliant faculty members and students, [Gender Neutral, Singular “They,” and All-Around Pronoun Guide](#).
7. Create a class culture of respect
 - a. Set a respectful tone by establishing behavior guidelines on the first day. This can be formalized into a written document you create alone or with the collaboration of students. [Discussion Ground Rules](#)
 - a. Include a conversation about the importance of not assuming the gender or pronouns that people identify with and consistently using the pronouns that people have asked to be used.
 - b. Respect the term (transgender, nonbinary, genderqueer, etc.) a person uses to describe themselves.
 - c. Do not allow students to bully other students or use other students' personal information as insults.
 - d. Do not claim to be “gender blind”; that approach dismisses students' experiences and identities rather than validating them.
8. Develop a plan for responding to incidents of misgendering. Misgendering occurs when someone refers to another person using terms or pronouns that do not match that individual's gender identity. When this happens, it is important to correct the mistake, whether you or someone else makes it.
9. Include relevant research and scholarship (e.g., research and scholarship on people who experience gender and sex-based marginalization, including nonbinary, queer, and gender expansive people).
 - a. Connect material to course learning objectives.

- b. Integrate this material throughout the course rather than relegating it to a separate unit.
 - c. Avoid tokenism that occurs by including only a narrow set of gender expansive voices.
 - d. Avoid suggesting a particular author represents the beliefs of all authors.
 - e. Do not simplify transgender or gender expansive individuals' experiences; include complexity and nuance.
 - f. Do not limit materials to those that focus on the negative experiences of marginalization; provide information on a wide range of topics and experiences.
 - g. Include scholarship written by queer and transgender and gender expansive authors and scholarship that includes queer and transgender and gender expansive participants/topics.
 - h. When mentioning a work by a specific individual, be explicit about that person's pronouns so that students refer to them correctly during discussions.
10. Acknowledge the limits of theories and research you cite; for example, note if a study focuses on cisgender heterosexual men or women.
11. Practice allyship by
- a. Listening to students and learning about their experiences.
 - b. Examining your own assumptions about gender and being aware of how they affect your behavior.
 - c. Not being afraid to admit you don't know everything.
 - d. Being consistent in your support of rights and defending students against discrimination as a matter of social justice. For example,
 - Address microaggressions directly
 - Get involved in campus groups/initiatives such as Transgender and Gender Expansive Workgroup
 - Take the initiative to change outdated language in program policies/procedures manuals
12. Learn and teach about intersectionality – the complex and cumulative ways that multiple systems of oppression combine, overlap, and interact in the lives of those with multiple marginalized identities to produce and sustain inequalities.
13. Know about and share university policies and resources.

This is a condensed version on a longer section to be posted on the CTE site. Two members of the Alliant Transgender and Gender Expansive(TGE) Work Group reviewed and contributed to the longer document; however, the CTE is fully responsible for its content and format.

Other Resources



Articles

[First Day of Class](#)

The author of this article in *the Chronicle of Higher Education* proposed four principles for teaching a good first day of class:

- Rather than beginning by handing out the syllabus, first spark students' curiosity by making a connection between your course and issues that interest them; show the significance of the course content to the students' lives.
- Foster a sense of community by (a) humanizing yourself to the students, (b) getting students talking to each other, and (c) greeting each student.
- Actively engage students in learning. For example, (a) ask them to try a cognitive task before they are ready or (b) ask them to think about how they will be able to succeed in the course.
- In order to clarify expectations, devote time to outlining the parameters of the course (e.g., materials, assessments, policies, key dates, and deadlines).

The author also discussed some logistical considerations in preparing for the first day of class, provided examples of activities from sample courses, and made suggestions for ways to follow up in subsequent classes (including advice for the last day of class).

[Active Learning](#)

The authors of this *Inside Higher Education* article reported that a “metastudy of more than 225 separate studies of learning found that, by every measure, active learning is more effective for every kind of student, in every discipline, than the traditional lecture mode or the question-and-answer guided discussion method.” In order to convince instructors who are still hesitant to try the techniques, they offered a list of the ten most salient attributes of active learning. They characterized active learning as (a) rigorous in that students learn and retain more; (b) empowering students to take responsibility for their own learning; (c) accessible and equitable and helping to reduce the achievement gap; (d) encouraging students to engage with the material and learn how to transfer knowledge from the classroom to other contexts; (e) yielding more diverse, imaginative responses from students; (f) encouraging metacognition by asking students to reflect on not only what they have learned but also how they have learned it; (g) teaching higher-order thinking skills as well as collaboration skills; (h) providing students with opportunities to give feedback and have input into future class activities; and (i) modeling openness to life-long learning.

[Improving Students’ Learning Experience](#)

In response to the difficulties many students experienced in the aftermath of the disruptions to education brought about by the pandemic, “faculty members and administrators are taking a deeper look at the connections among mental health, feelings of belonging, and the ability to learn.” According to this article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, which focuses on ways colleges can improve the educational experience of students in the coming year, “a growing body of research has demonstrated how a strong sense of belonging can improve students’ likelihood of persisting in college.” One tack has been to encourage instructors to create a more positive, welcoming environment for students. Examples include sending a welcome message to students before the course begins, ensuring diversity among the experts cited, and using supportive language in messages to struggling students. Another approach is to strengthen peer-led collaborative learning such as including time each week when students gather to apply what they learned in class, led by paid and trained students with experience in the subject.

Podcasts

[Disrupting the Syllabus](#)

Dr. Julia Charles-Linen gave her ideas on the *On Teaching in Higher Ed* podcast about “disrupting the syllabus”. She talked about her view of the syllabus as a tool for student engagement as well as a means for laying out the specifics and requirements of a course. She believes that “When the syllabus is a document that you can be excited about, students become more creative in the class” and gave access to one of her syllabi.

Blogs

Syllabus Snapshot

<https://blogs.oregonstate.edu/osuteaching/>

The author, Dr. Regan Gurung, Executive Director of the Oregon State University Center for Teaching and Learning, advocates for initially giving students a Syllabus Snapshot, which he describes as “ a one-page document that provides the main elements of the course in an easy to digest way”. It tells students about the instructor (including contact information) and the course expectations and requirements (including assignments and due dates). This abbreviated version of the syllabus serves as an introduction to the course, which is then followed by the longer, more formal and complete syllabus.



Team Projects

Although research has indicated that students learn better and develop useful skills when working on group projects, students – for the most part – would rather work alone. This preference is usually due to having had bad experiences working with teams (e.g., poorly designed projects with little support from the instructor, teammates who didn't do their share of the work, feeling that the project was just busywork, and difficulties meeting outside of class due to conflicting schedules). The University of Minnesota Center for Educational Innovation has created a *Faculty Guide to Team Projects* that covers the following topics and highlights effective practices:

- Characteristics of successful team projects
 - Design an authentic task that requires both collaboration and distinct contributions
- How to introduce the project to students to get maximum buy-in
 - Share with students the purpose and benefits of the team project
- How to form effective teams
 - Create teams that are heterogeneous with respect to knowledge, skills, and perspectives
- How to assess team projects
 - Assess team output and individual contributions and understanding
- How to support students during the project process
 - Provide structure, time, and skill development training
- How to wrap up a team project
 - Share final team projects with the class and reflect on the outcomes

The guide also includes specific advice on designing and implementing team projects as well as examples and references for further information.

[Faculty Guide to Team Projects](#)

On the CTE site, see [Evaluating Group Projects](#)

Faculty Success and Well-Being



[Writing Tips](#)

The author of this *Chronicle of Higher Education* article provides the following ten tips to improve one's own writing: (a) writing improves with practice; (b) set goals for output (e.g., number of pages); (c) write about topics/issues that are interesting to you; (d) take time to develop ideas, including by writing about them; (e) the writing process can feel difficult and even discouraging; (f) think of writing as solving a puzzle; (g) give priority to writing; (h) start small and keep developing your thoughts; (i) be prepared to make mistakes; and (j) edit repeatedly and consult with colleagues.

[Social Distanced Writing Group](#)

In this *Chronicle of Higher Education* article, the author describes a Social Distanced Writing Group that she established with colleagues during the pandemic lockdown. They met via Zoom for two hours every morning - five days a week – and designed a structure that allowed brief time for socializing, discussion of work (two 10-minute small group meetings), and independent writing (two 50-minute sessions). The group members developed friendships as well as a challenging and supportive intellectual community that helped them be productive. The author's advice for anyone contemplating forming a group is "Just be welcoming, generous, honest, and curious".

[Choking Under Pressure](#)

Dr. Sian Beilock is a cognitive scientist who has served as president of Barnard College since 2017. She was recently chosen to become the first woman president of Dartmouth College. Her academic area of expertise is "the brain science behind 'choking under pressure,' with applications for performance in test taking, public speaking and athletics". This is a link to Ted Talk she gave in 2017, described as follows: "When the pressure is on, why do we sometimes fail to live up to our potential? Cognitive scientist and Barnard College president Sian Leah Beilock reveals what

happens in your brain and body when you choke in stressful situations, sharing psychological tools that can help you perform at your best when it matters most”.

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