



Alliant International University Center for Teaching and Excellence - Newsletter

January 10, 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

Center for Teaching Excellence

February 24, 2022, 4:00 - 5:30 PM Dr. Rhoda Olkin will present a webinar that is designed for those who want to include teaching about disability as part of diversity. After a brief review of key foundational concepts, three sample activities will be presented. Finally, suggestions for assessment of outcomes will be discussed. (Note that this is mostly a repeat of a previous workshop with Dr. Olkin in Fall, 2021.) This workshop will provide 1.5 CE UNITS.

[Click here to register](#)

Other Events



ON DEMAND

Center for Teaching Excellence Interactive Webinars

Sponsored by the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Dr. Kumea Shorten-Gooden presented three interactive webinars:

Culturally Responsive Mentoring **Diversity Flashpoints in the classroom** **Implicit Bias: What It Is and How to Interrupt It**

Her PowerPoint presentations and case scenarios are available on the CTE site.

[Interactive Webinars](#)

Other

Chronicle of Higher Education

Next Steps for the Inclusive Classroom

This recorded webinar features a panel of experts in teaching and learning discussing what lies ahead for the inclusive classroom, in both traditional and hybrid settings. Topics include such questions as:

- How will insights gained during virtual semesters inform teaching as colleges return to traditional classrooms?
- How can digital tools help build inclusive classrooms, where all students feel able and excited to participate?
- How will the pandemic experience affect longer-term faculty efforts to teach differently as student demographics shift nationally?
- [Next Steps in the Inclusive Classroom](#)



Rubrics

The Center for Teaching Excellence site on Assessment Resources provides a general discussion of creating rubrics that includes information on benefits for faculty and students, a detailed description of the steps in creating them, and multiple examples.

[Creating Rubrics](#)

It also contains sections on these specific rubrics:

Rubrics for student written assignments:

[Rubrics for Written Assignments](#)

Rubrics for dissertations:

[Rubrics for Dissertations](#)

Rubrics for class participation:

[Rubrics for Class Participation](#)

Teaching Tips



Interpreting Teaching Evaluations

At the end of each semester, Alliant students are asked to fill out online a course evaluation form for each course in which they are enrolled. The intent of these evaluations is to provide instructors with information that will help them revise a course and improve their teaching, if needed. A copy of the current survey can be found at the [Alliant Course Evaluation Process SharePoint](#) site.

Interpreting quantitative results:

1. The feedback report provides information on means, medians, and distributions for each question. The most helpful approach to understanding the results is to begin by examining the distribution, looking at the percentage of students who experienced this attribute as a strength. Because most faculty nationwide receive ratings toward the upper end of the scale, many scores at the midpoint of the scale may be a signal that students perceived significant challenges with the course or instructor.
2. Determine whether the class breaks into groups. Are there clusters of high scores and low ones, with little middle ground, that reflect two different experiences? Think about why that might be.
3. Means can be compared to those of the school and university as well as to those of other courses and the same course over time. CSPP courses are the majority of courses in the semester system, and CSOE courses are a majority of courses in the term system, so the school data approximates Alliant data for those two schools. (It is important also to examine medians because distributions may be skewed, especially if the number of number of respondents is low).
4. Look for patterns in scores that are highest and lowest across courses. Are strengths and weaknesses consistent across courses, or are they unique to specific courses, depending on their characteristics?

5. Look for trends over time. If there are changes, why might they have occurred? The university also provides data on faculty means by question since 2005, which may can be used for comparisons. [Course Evaluation Means by Academic Year](#)
6. Do not focus on composite scores. Collapsing all items into one score assumes each item is of equal importance.

Interpreting qualitative results:

1. Comments can be helpful by providing a context for ratings as well as specific suggestions for improvement. In interpreting comments, it is helpful to group them into themes and count the number of responses associated with each theme.
2. Instead of focusing on either positive or negative feedback, it is useful to consider the range and specific content of responses students provide. Look for specific actionable ideas, rather than focusing on whether they are favorable or not.
3. Look for patterns here, too. Are there issues that have been raised by multiple students? Do several people agree on a strength or weakness of the course? Critical comments can be helpful if they point out aspects of the course that did not go well but can be changed in the future.
4. Determine whether the comments are consistent within the class, indicating agreement among students. Do they cluster into several subgroups? If so, what might account for these group differences?
5. Again, compare comments/themes across courses and time. Are there consistencies? Are there trends related to characteristics of the course?
6. Although qualitative comments often provide valuable information that clarifies the quantitative ratings as well as specific actionable suggestions for improvement, they are also problematic in that it is easier to focus on negative issues or isolated student experiences. It is important to focus on strengths as well as weaknesses.

It may be useful to share both numeric ratings and narrative comments with a colleague or mentor who can provide advice and help achieve perspective. These colleagues can help not only interpret the findings but also develop both short- and long-term strategies for improving as a teacher. Small changes can have big effects. The Center for Teaching Excellence can also provide consultation.

For more on the topic see: [Interpreting course evaluations](#)

For a recent review see: [What can course evaluations say about teaching?](#)



Newsletter Articles

[Why Give Final Exams?](#)

In this *Chronicle of Higher Education* article, the author questions whether one high stakes assessment gives an accurate picture of what students have learned in a course. He suggests alternatives such as a research paper and poster or a portfolio and presentation that allow students to demonstrate the synthesis and integration of their learning during the course. He also suggests that if, given the course learning objectives, a final exam is appropriate, the instructor focus only on crucial information, excluding information that is not central to the focus of the course. Additionally, may be useful to ask students to provide a summary and reflection on their learning or to apply the material to a real world problem.

[Using the word *Rigor*](#)

In this article from the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, the authors argue that “rigor” is an exclusionary concept that promotes preferential practices. “Rigorous” approaches privilege students who already have high [academic literacy](#) or who are already adept at managing higher education’s unofficial rules, routines, and structures — also known as the [hidden curriculum](#). They offer suggestions for how instructors can have high standards while also ensuring [inclusive teaching](#) practices.

Podcasts

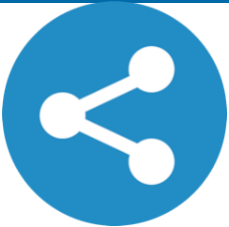
[How to Use Podcasts in Teaching](#)

In this Teaching in Higher Ed podcast, Barbi Honeycutt talks about using podcasts in while teaching. She makes several suggestions, including finding and podcasts that are already out there and fit with course goals, learning objectives, and course topics. She also provides resources on how to use podcast to supplement lectures and encourage student engagement.

[What Inclusive Instructors Do](#)

In this Teaching in Higher Ed podcast, Dr. Tracie Addy speaks about approaches instructors can take in order to create an inclusive classroom. She also provides a list of resources to facilitate these efforts.

Shared Resources



Teaching Resources

[Teaching in person with a mask](#)

This section from the Cornell University Center for Teaching Innovation provides tips for teaching in person while wearing a mask, including how to (a) choose the right mask and microphone; (b) project your voice; and (c) protect your voice and avoid vocal fatigue.

It also makes additional suggestions and provides relevant resources.

[Teaching Teamwork](#)

This article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* the authors argue that teamwork is an important skill for students to learn. They provides nine suggestions for how to design group projects to that they optimize students’ learning of this skill.

Faculty Success and Well-Being



Faculty Life

[Taking an Improv Class](#)

In this article in *Inside Higher Education instructor*, a college instructor describes her experience taking an Improv Class and draws conclusions about what she learned about teaching and ways of navigating other interactions.

[Faculty Burnout](#)

In this *Chronicle of Higher Education* article, a former faculty member describes his own experiences as a faculty member and then summarizes and critically analyzes research on burnout. He is especially critical of the subjectivity and inconsistency of definitions, which has caused confusion about prevalence.

Dalia Ducker

Alliant International University

dducker@alliant.edu

