Alliant International University Center for Teaching and Excellence - Newsletter

September 2024

The Center for Teaching Excellence monthly newsletter provides information about events sponsored by the CTE as well as around the university and beyond. We also highlight resources available to Alliant faculty on the CTE site and elsewhere.

Dalia Ducker

Center for Teaching Excellence Upcoming Events

Leveraging the Library to Make Your Job Easier and Your Instruction Richer

Register Now

September 19, 2024
12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m. (PT)
Location: Zoom
By Scott Zimmer, JD, Ed.D.

Participants will learn how to incorporate library resources into their courses at every stage of the course life cycle, from course design and development to resource selection, to skill development and evaluation. Need a textbook for a course you are designing? The library can help find ones that allow institutional purchase, so students can use the library eBook instead of buying their own. Looking for a set of articles for students to compare and contrast? The library can help you search for them, provide you with copies, and check permissions to make sure you can use them. Wanting to scaffold students' understanding of plagiarism and APA style, without losing class time? The library has tutorials and quizzes that you can assign to your students. We'll cover these and other strategies you can use to build or improve your course, while not adding to your workload.

Finding Balance: Integrating AI While Fostering Authentic Student Learning

Register Now

October 17, 2024
12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m. (PT)
Location: Zoom
By Jeremy Bond, D.E.T. & Melissa Vervinck, D.E.T.

Explore strategies to strike the right balance between using AI as a tool and fostering authentic student learning. This 60-minute webinar covers designing assessments that encourage original inquiry and problem-solving. It also covers adapting assignments to embrace AI while encouraging students to use skills like creativity, analysis, and reflection, all while promoting ethical AI usage. Gain insights into integrating AI responsibly to support student inquiry while promoting essential critical thinking and lifelong learning skills.

Elevating Learning: The RISE Model for Effective Feedback

Register Now

November 21, 2024
12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m. (PT)
Location: Zoom
By Jeremy Bond, D.E.T. & Melissa Vervinck, D.E.T.

In this webinar, participants will explore the RISE Model, developed by Emily Wray, which focuses on providing feedback with the elements of Reflection, Inquiry, Suggestion, and Elevation. The model transforms feedback into a collaborative dialogue, encouraging students to use their skills of self-awareness, critical thinking, and agency. By emphasizing the unique human characteristics that contribute to rich learning experiences, this approach fosters meaningful discussions between students and instructors. By implementing the RISE Model, instructors can create a supportive learning environment that fosters student growth, engagement, and long-term success.

Resources from the Department of Online Teaching

Canvas Group Projects and Formative Assessments: Authentic Learning in the AI Era

Melissa Vervinck, D.E.T

Adult learners who choose to take online courses often find themselves juggling myriad responsibilities, both professional and personal. To engage these students, flexible, meaningful, and authentic learning experiences, which build engagement and collaboration opportunities, should be considered when designing a course. One way to do this is by including both formative and summative assessments in collaborative group activities. Instructors can enhance student engagement and promote peer interaction, all while ensuring that weekly learning objectives and course outcomes are met. Additionally, group activities that require personal input and interaction are difficult to replicate with current AI tools. This encourages students to rely more on their own knowledge and experiences, allowing instructors to better assess learning and comprehension.

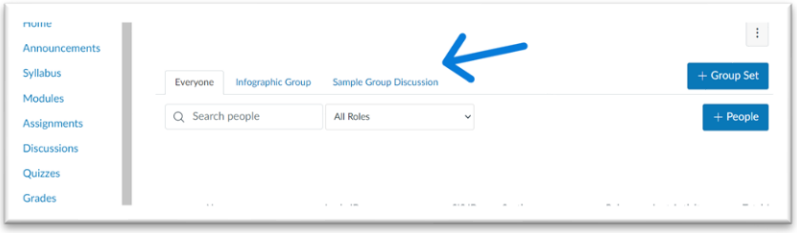
Collaborative Groups
Collaborative groups foster a sense of community, enabling students to share ideas and learn from peers, which is particularly effective for adult learners. This approach aligns with Malcolm Knowles' principles of andragogy and the Connected Learning Framework when adapted for adults, emphasizing "colleague-supported, inquiry-driven, and improvement-oriented" learning (Eidman-Aadahl, 2012). By designing group activities that integrate adult learners' professional and lived experiences into academic contexts, instructors create valuable opportunities for peer learning. This method deepens students' understanding of theoretical frameworks and bridges the gap between theory and practice. The diverse perspectives within collaborative groups enhance the overall learning experience, making it more relevant and engaging for adult students in online environments.

Setting Up Group Projects in Canvas
Canvas offers a group project feature that instructors will need to set up prior to the beginning of a project, as it provides benefits for both students and instructors. This feature facilitates student collaboration, streamlines assignment management, and enables effective assessment throughout the project's duration. Students can use their dedicated group area for communication and collaboration, which is private, meaning that non-members will not have access. Meanwhile, instructors can monitor

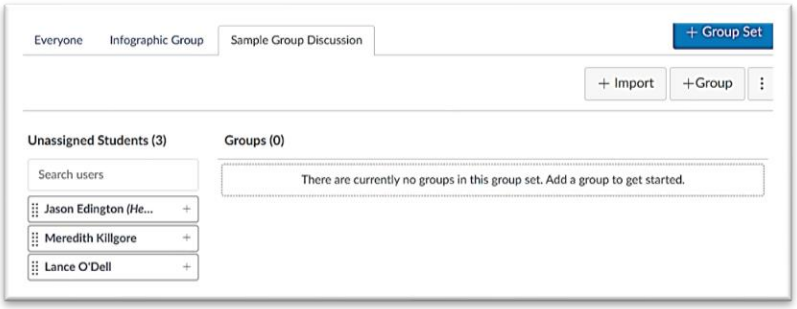
group interactions, provide targeted formative and summative feedback, and automatically assign grades to entire groups, which will then populate in each group member's gradebook, thus reducing their administrative burden. If needed, the ability to adjust a single student's grade and feedback remains available.

For online courses created by Online Learning at Alliant, group project settings will have already been configured for a group assignment. As an instructor, you will need to complete the following to assign students to a group. Open your course, and complete the following steps:

1. **Navigate to "People":**
   - In your course menu, click on "People."



2. **Open the Group Set:**
   - Find and click on the name of the Group Set you want to add students to.



3. **Add Students to Groups:**
   - In the "Unassigned Students" section, locate the student you want to add.
   - Drag and drop the student's name into the desired group.
   - Alternatively, you can click the "+" icon next to the student's name and select the group from the dropdown menu.
4. **Verify Group Membership:**
   - Check the group to ensure the student has been added. The member count for the group should update accordingly.

NOTE: When teaching a course using Canvas at Alliant without Groups, instructors will need to complete the following steps prior to assigning group members.

1. **Create a Group Set:**
   - Navigate to "People" in your course menu.
   - Click "+ Group Set" and name your project.
   - Choose to create groups manually for more control.
2. **Form the Groups:**
   - Click "+ Group" within the Group Set.
   - Name each group descriptively.
   - Drag and drop students into their assigned groups.
3. **Create a Group Assignment:**

- In “Assignments,” click “Add Assignment.”
- Check “This is a Group Assignment.”
- Select your created Group Set from the dropdown menu.

4. **Configure Assignment Settings:**
   - Set due dates and availability.
   - Consider enabling peer reviews for additional collaboration.
   - Decide whether to assign grades individually or to the group as a whole.

Implementing Effective Collaborative Projects
In a time when AI-generated content is increasingly prevalent, well-structured group projects serve as a tool for authentic engagement. Regular check-ins as students use Canvas for group work, combined with formative assessments, can help gauge individual contributions while providing ongoing actionable feedback. For example, rather than only grading the final product, students can create a "collaboration portfolio" to document their collaborative process throughout the project. This portfolio may include reflection journals, recorded team meetings, and peer feedback, serving as both a learning tool and a means for integrating formative assessments.

Conclusion
Collaborative group projects in Canvas, combined with thoughtful formative assessments, effectively engage adult learners. By fostering meaningful collaboration and providing ongoing feedback, instructors create a learning community that values original thinking and authentic engagement.

References
Eidman-Aadahl, E. (2012, 14 August). Communities of practice for professional learning: Connected learning for adults [Webinar]. Retrieved from https://educatorinnovator.org/webinars/elyse-eidmanaadahl-communities-of-practice-for-professional-learning-connected-learning-for-adults/

Hogue, R. J. (2019). Principles of Andragogy [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= UgNeWsbKDUY

Teaching Tips

Creating Multiple Choice Questions

Multiple choice questions require students to identify the right answers from a set of options presented to them. Each multiple-choice item consists of a problem, known as the stem, and a list of suggested solutions, known as alternatives. The alternatives consist of one correct or best alternative, which is the answer, and incorrect or inferior alternatives, known as distractors.

General Suggestions

- Write the prompt first, then the correct answer, then the distractors (incorrect options).
- Keep content of items independent of one another, so they do not overlap.
- Minimize the amount of reading required for each item.
- Use vocabulary consistent with student level of understanding.
- Make sure the length of the test fits with the time students have been given to take the test.
- Instruct students to select the “best” answer, rather than the right answer

Tips for Writing Multiple-Choice Item Stems

- Use a single, clearly stated problem or question in each item.

- Describe the problem fully, including all relevant information.
- Avoid irrelevant information and unnecessary complexity.
- State the stem as a question or as a complete statement (not an incomplete statement).
- Include a verb that indicates what the student is to do (e.g., identify the best answer).
- Make sure that grammatical clues are not provided within the stem that would help students to guess the correct answer (e.g., the use of a or an or singular or plural verbs or nouns).
- Avoid negatives and double negatives.
- Avoid idioms.
- Avoid questions of the form "Which of the following statements is correct?"
- Avoid using word absolutes such as always, never, all, or none.

Tips for Writing Multiple-Choice Answer Options

- Include 3 to 5 options.
- Make sure there is only one best option.
- Make options similar in grammar, length, complexity, and style.
- Make sure the options follow the stem in a grammatically correct manner.
- Write the correct and incorrect options in a parallel style.
- Make all options plausible.
- Make options clear and concise (not wordy).
- Avoid options such as "all of the above" or "both A and B."
- Avoid options such as "none of the above."
- Vary the positions of the correct options.
- Make options mutually exclusive, not overlapping.
- Don't create trick questions by making the distractors too similar to the correct answer.
- Present alternatives in logical order (e.g., alphabetical or numerical).
- Use letter, preferably capitals, rather than number the options.

New CTE Resources

Role of the Dissertation Committee Chairperson

In its section on mentoring and supervision, the CTE has a newly posted section on the role of the dissertation committee chairperson. This section includes a list of the major aspects of that role, divided into those that entail dissertation specific advising and those that entail career advising. The list of activities is meant to help faculty members as they conceptualize, plan, and develop their working relationships with their dissertation students.

Shared Resources

Digital Accessibility

The University of Nebraska at Lincoln's Teacher Connect has provided information on removing barriers with digital accessibility, which means designing course materials in ways that everyone can use, including students using assistive technology like a screen reader. The article lists guidelines for making digital materials accessible. These include the following:

- **Links:** Avoid using actual URLs and instead, use descriptive hyperlinks. For example, instead of 'Click here,' use a description like 'Download the syllabus file'

- **Images:** Ensure all images have descriptive Alt Text so a person using a screen reader knows what the image is intended to convey.
- **Video:** Ensure videos have accurate captions and punctuation. Also, everything shown in the video should be verbally explained.
- **Headings:** Use heading styles built into the program you're using instead of relying solely on formatting like bold/italics.
- **Color:** Ensure sufficient color contrast and avoid using color for emphasis. If you use color to give meaning to specific text, add a second type of formatting like bold or italics.
- **Tables:** Use tables for data only, not just to add structure or organization to your document. Ensure that you designate a header row so a screen reader can better navigate the table. Give the table a caption and Alt Text so the purpose of the table is clear to everyone.

The Course Materials Accessibility resource from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln's Center for Transformative Teaching has more detail on how to implement these guidelines in different programs.

The Alliant CTE provides the following resources on ensuring accessibility:

- Universal Design for Learning
- Fact Sheets and Webinars on Disability and Ableism

These resources include this webinar available on demand:

- Digital Accessibility in Online and On Ground Teaching

Other Resources

AI Resources

Beth McMurtry, in the *Teaching* newsletter from the *Chronicle of Higher Education,* provided a list of AI resources:

- AI Hacks for Educators: Practical Tips to Save Time by Using GenAI an open-source, downloadable guide written by Kevin Yee, Laurie Uttich, Eric Main, and Elizabeth Giltner of UCF.
- Teaching With AI: A Practical Guide to a New Era of Human Learning by José Antonio Bowen and C. Edward Watson. You can also find AI prompts and further detail on AI tools on Bowen's website.
- Teaching Repository for AI-Infused Learning is an UCF project just getting off the ground. If you'd like to submit a project, see the website for details.
- Generative AI Product Tracker by Ithaka S+R can help you stay on top of the tools.
- Syllabi Policies for AI-Generative Tools a crowdsourced document created by Lance Eaton at College Unbound.

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