



September 6, 2023

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



Beginning in September, the Center for Teaching Excellence and the Department of Online Learning at Alliant will host a three-part webinar series to explore topics related to the use of AI software in higher education. The aims are to provide guidance and best practices and stimulate discussion.

Information on the first webinar in the series:

- **Date & Time:** September 29, 2023, 9:00 – 10:00am Pacific Time
- **Title:** Teaching in the age of AI
- **Presenter:** Dr. Afarin Rajail, assistant professor, CFT program, Alliant International University

Registration Link:

<https://alliant.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJYuc-Cuqz8tGNAazbtAfRIUt9OzT9k7qFrt>

Information on the second webinar in the series:

- **Date & Time:** October 13, 2023, 9:00-10:00am Pacific Time
- **Title: AI in Higher Education: Problems, Potentials, and Possible Futures**
- **Presenter:** Dr. Troy Hicks, professor of English and Education at Central Michigan where he serves as Chair of the Department of Teacher and Special and directs the Chippewa River Writing Project.

Link:

<https://alliant.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJUkd-mrrT4vH9Fe-EfT9gg0ZAz48AqLZEcE>

Information on the third webinar in the series:

- **Date & Time:** November 17, 2023, 9:00-10:00a, Pacific Time
- **Title: Considerations when using AI Detection Tools**
- **Presenter:** Dr. Jeremy Bond, Director of Online Learning, Alliant International University

Dr. Melissa Vervinck, Instructional Designer, Alliant International University

Registration Link: <https://alliant.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJMoc-yuqzlpE92jlfHYcwfNq3l90tBAKZ-F>

Other Alliant Upcoming Events



This fall, the Provost's Office will sponsor a series of workshops for new faculty members, organized by Dr. KJ Conner, Assistant Vice President of Academic Administration.

Tues, Sept 12 12-2pm: Teaching Tips, Feedback, & Evaluation Featuring: Dalia Ducker & Jeremy Bond

Thurs, Oct 5 12-2pm: Faculty Expectations, Evaluation, Promotion, & Retention

Featuring: Yolanda Miller (workloads), SPERC Chair (eval, promotion, & retention)

Mon, Oct 23 12-2pm: Admin. Structure, Faculty Governance Structure, & University Values Featuring:

Tracy Heller

Mon, Nov 13 12-2pm: Student Services & Mentorship

Featuring: Esmeralda Silva, Michelle Jackson (OOA), Ollin Stowers (FWS)

Thurs, Dec 7 12-2pm: Scholarship Opportunities & Resources

Featuring: Ava Chan-Crowder (AEF)

Online Learning Team



Leveraging Technology for Your Advantage: Account Settings and Notifications in Canvas

Melissa Vervinck, D.E.T.

Offering guidance and assistance to all instructors using Canvas is among the services provided by the Online Learning Team, including for those teaching online, hybrid, or face-to-face courses. In this and subsequent CTE newsletters this academic year, each month the Online Learning Team will provide a scenario and possible solution for an issue involving the use of technology that instructors may encounter.

Let's take a look at an email requesting help with a typical challenge for instructors who use discussion forums in Canvas.

Dear Online Learning Team,

I would love your advice. I find navigating the discussion forums in Canvas to be time-consuming because I am grappling with identifying when and where students have posted responses that I need to address in the various classes I teach. Any insights or tools to enhance efficiency would be greatly appreciated.

Best Regards,

Professor Ed Useeker

Solution: Using Notification Settings in Canvas

In Canvas, there are a variety of notifications settings you can personalize so that you can be notified about what your students are doing or even what you need to do in Canvas. These include course activities, discussions, conversations, scheduling, groups, and alerts. In response to Professor Ed Useeker's question, let's look at updating the notifications in the discussions section, as it can be time consuming to check each day to see if there is a student post that needs to be addressed. Plus, you do not want to miss a post created in a weekly general discussion forum if a student has a time sensitive question. By completing a few steps, you can ensure that you will receive notifications to your Alliant email address when students post to any discussion forum.

Subscribing to a Discussion Forum

1. Open each individual discussion forum and look for the Subscribe button located below the prompt. Click on it, and it will turn green. You are now subscribed to that forum.
2. If you subscribe to each discussion forum while creating your weekly announcement or reviewing the module for the following week, you will always be ready for those students who post as soon as the assignments are open.
3. You will receive notifications only for discussion forums you have subscribed to, so you will need to complete this task for each discussion forum for each course that you want to receive notifications about.

Canvas Account: Notifications

4. Click on Account and your profile picture in Canvas Global Navigation bar located on the left side of your computer screen.
5. From the popout menu, select Notifications.
6. In the area labeled Settings for choose to make changes to your account or a specific course. If you choose account, the settings you choose will apply to all courses that you are teaching.
7. Next, scroll through the list of items you can make changes to. These include course activities, discussions, conversations, scheduling, groups, conferences, and alerts.
8. For discussion forum notifications, choose New Reply in the Discussion section.
9. Hover over the icon to the right. Choose the icon that represents your choice; however, we would suggest that you select either Notify immediately or Daily summary.

By modifying your notification settings, you will receive email alerts whenever a student makes a post to a discussion board so that you know which discussion board needs your attention. On the days you do not receive a notification, you do not need to review the discussion boards in those courses.

Additional Account Settings

While you are updating your Notifications, you should also review and update your Profile information and your Settings. You will notice a new feature located in Settings – pronouns. Now, you may add your preferred pronoun to Canvas. Your pronouns will be display with your username in the following areas in Canvas:

- Assignment Creation Menu
- Assignment Peer Review Page
- Comment Fields
- Course Sections List
- Discussions
- Inbox
- People Pages (Account, Course, and Group)
- Student Context Card
- User Navigation Menu
- User Profile
- User Settings

To review and update your Profile and Settings information, you will need to:

- Profile: Click on the kebab menu – also known as the three-dot menu – located on the top right side of the screen. Then, click on Edit Profile. Review information and update according to your preferences. Once you have made all updates, click Save Profile.
- Settings – click on Edit Settings on the right side of the screen. Once you have made all updates, click Update Settings to save your choices.

If you need additional assistance when updating your Account Settings, we would be happy to help; contact us at onlinelearningstaff@alliant.edu. Also, if you have inquiries regarding specific features in Canvas, feel free to email those as well. You never know, we may use your question in a future CTE newsletter column, using a pseudonym, of course.

Teaching Tips



Teaching Tips for Teaching Assistants

Below are teaching tips and pieces of advice related to being a teaching assistant. They presume that a TA will be working in conjunction with a course instructor, who is primarily responsible for the course.

These tips focus on on-ground teaching, but some can also apply to online teaching. (Links are provided to relevant resources on the CTE site.) Although they are aimed at TAs, they are relevant for all instructors, both new and experienced.

- Communicate enthusiasm about teaching and the course material. [Making Teaching Engaging](#)
- Be responsible. Do not be late or miss class. Respond to student emails and return work in a timely manner.
- Establish a clear goal for each session you teach. Goals should be related to course learning objectives and planned assessments. They should focus on ensuring students understand course materials and reading assignments. [Developing Student Learning Objectives](#). [Student Assessment](#)
- Be prepared. Spend time before each session planning the content you want to cover, the activities you expect to use, and questions you want to ask. [Developing or Revising a Course](#)
- Use the first day of class not only to provide information about the course, but also to set the tone. Begin to present or discuss course content to capture students' interest, spark their

- curiosity, and build their enthusiasm. Also, use the time to model your teaching philosophy and build rapport. [First Day of Class. Using Icebreakers](#)
- Be clear about your expectations from the start and don't make major changes as the semester/term progresses.
 - Encourage students to ask questions. Watch for signs of confusion and check with students for the source of their confusion.
 - Remember that you don't have to know all the answers. Don't be afraid to admit that you don't know something. Find the answer after class and follow up during the next session.
 - Introduce variety in learning activities, including incorporating active learning strategies. Avoid giving long lectures and use technology to supplement those you do give. [Promoting Active Learning. Preparing and Presenting Lectures. Using PowerPoint](#) Pay attention to pacing.
 - Prepare more material than you need, but also leave time for questions. Do not rush but do not run over your time limit.
 - In discussions, give students time to answer questions. Ask students to expand on what they have said. Don't talk too much; rather, serve as a moderator who clarifies and summarizes points and refocuses the discussion if needed. [Facilitating Class Discussions](#)
 - Use inclusive teaching techniques and be sensitive to implicit bias and microaggressions that might occur in the class. [Inclusive Teaching. Implicit Bias. Microaggressions in the Classroom.](#)
 - Create a sense of community among students. Deal with disruptive students immediately. [Cultivating a Sense of Belonging and Building Rapport. Managing Disruptive Student Behavior.](#)
 - Create an open and inclusive class environment so students feel welcome to express their ideas. Develop ground rules for participation and discussion. [Creating a Positive Class Climate. Managing Disruptive Student Behavior. Facilitating Difficult Dialogues](#)
 - Connect with students. Learn their names and something about their preparation. Provide some information about yourself. Be empathic and respectful but maintain professional boundaries.
 - Be approachable and accessible to students who seek help. Be prepared for students' requests for exceptions; have policies and stick to them so everyone is treated fairly. [Office Hours. Balancing Structure and Flexibility](#)
 - Give students regular constructive feedback on their progress. Don't be condescending or sarcastic to students who make mistakes. [Providing Effective Feedback](#)
 - Know what to do when you suspect a student of cheating or committing plagiarism. It is often helpful to seek consultation before acting. [Addressing Plagiarism](#)
 - Be aware of and act according to ethical standards and legal requirements. Be fair to all students and don't play favorites.
 - Check out the classroom and the equipment you plan to use before the first day of class. Expect that things won't always go as planned; don't be discouraged by these bad days. Try to learn from them and understanding what went wrong. [Reflective Teaching](#)
 - Know about resources available for students who need help.
 - Provide students with opportunities to give you feedback (e.g., midterm evaluations). Use the feedback to improve your teaching. [Developing and Implementing Midterm Feedback](#)
 - Ask for help from other teaching assistants, instructors, or the Center for Teaching Excellence.

More information is available at [Preparing Students to Teach](#)

Other Resources

[ChatGPT and fake citations](#)

In this Chronicle of Higher Education article, the author reported on problems with asking ChatGPT to find sources. Experience has shown that in some cases such a search yields fake citations, commonly known as "hallucinations." Some researchers are using AI tools trained for academic research, but even they can be problematic. "The best way to use these AI tools responsibly is to constantly check



sources... Researchers should also be transparent in their papers about when they've used AI, so readers can determine for themselves if they trust the information ..." It is also important to alert student researchers to these potential problems.



Advice Guides for Teaching

The *Chronicle of Higher Education* offers a range of free advice guides designed to help improve teaching. They're written by experts for instructors who want to gather ideas on [creating a syllabus](#), [teaching a good first day of class](#), [making your teaching more engaging](#), [improving classroom discussion](#), [making your teaching more inclusive](#) and [being a better online teacher](#).



[Burnout Mitigation Strategies](#)

This Chronicle of Higher Education column on teaching has a discussion of burnout mitigation strategies by Regan A.R. Gurung, executive director of the Center for Teaching and Learning, at Oregon State University. He advises faculty members to protect their personal time and space (and gives examples of how to do that) and to be consciously aware of their mental health. (For more on this topic from Dr. Gurung, see [Care in the Academy](#).)

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