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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 News



Searching the CTE Site

The CTE website is searchable. A small magnifying glass icon appears at the top right-hand corner of every page. It allows users to enter a word or phrase to search for a topic of interest. For example, a search for the word **Syllabus** yields the following results.

- [How to Create a Syllabus](#)
- [Creating an Inclusive Syllabus](#)
- [First Generation Students](#)
- [Hyperlinks and Embedding Videos in the Rich Content Editor \(RCE\)](#)
- [Course Ground Rules](#)
- [Teaching Tips for New Instructors](#)
- [Faculty Use](#)
- [Sample Language Regarding Student Use of Generative AI](#)
- [Concerns about Generative Artificial Intelligence](#)

Upcoming Events



Fall Webinar Series

Starting Strong: More Features in Canvas You Might Not Know About [Register Now](#)

August 28, 2025, 12:00 – 1:00 pm, PT
Zoom
Jeremy Bond, D.E.T.

Are your newest courses several screens of scrolling away? Do students seem to miss your announcements altogether? Are they watching your videos? How do you know? From taming an ever-expanding dashboard, to getting students to read announcements, and engage with your videos, with a few other useful things tucked in between, little known and even lesser-utilized Canvas features will be covered in this interactive session.

Two-Part Webinar Series: AI-Enhanced Learning: Designing Courses and Supporting Student Collaboration

We invite you to join our two-part webinar series on integrating AI into higher education courses. Each session will focus on distinct aspects of AI integration, offering insights and practical approaches to enhance your educational practices. The first webinar will focus on integrating AI into course assignments during development, while the second will address how to help students collaborate with AI for existing course assignments.

- **Designing with Intelligence: Embedding AI into Programs, Pedagogy, and Practice**
[Register Now](#)

September 25, 2025, 12:00 – 1:00 pm, PT
Zoom

Meredith Killgore Villa, M.Ed., M.M.

Artificial Intelligence is transforming education—not just through tools, but also through how we design learning itself. This webinar explores how educators can thoughtfully integrate AI into academic programs, create assignments that leverage AI's strengths, and empower students to use AI tools ethically and effectively.

- **Supporting Students' Collaboration with AI: Promoting Responsible Use and Practical Application**

[Register Now](#)

October 30, 2025, 12:00 – 1:00 pm, PT

Zoom

Melissa Vervinck, D.E.T.

Discover how to shift the narrative from AI as a tool for shortcuts to AI as a collaborative partner in learning. This webinar will provide practical strategies for integrating AI education into your curriculum, emphasizing the importance of guiding students from misusing AI to mastering it as a way that is useful, accurate and ethical.

Events On Demand



AI, Originality, and Accountability: Navigating Student Conversations

By Diane Zelman, PhD, and Jeremy Bond, D.E.T.

[View Recorded Webinar](#)

[View Webinar Slides](#)

Join us for an engaging and interactive webinar focused on strategies for facilitating constructive, respectful conversations with students when there are concerns about the use—or overuse—of AI tools in course assignments. Using real-world examples, we will explore how to approach these sensitive dialogues in ways that uphold academic integrity while fostering student learning and growth.

Designed for faculty members, this session will support the development of mentorship skills, encourage reflection on evolving perspectives about AI, and promote thoughtful accountability in students' use of emerging technologies.

Topics will include:

- How to introduce the topic in syllabi, class discussions, and one-on-one meetings
- Setting and communicating clear expectations
- Engaging students in dialogue about originality and learning goals
- Guiding responsible, creative, and informed use of AI tools

A Selection of AI Tools for Academia and Psychotherapy

By Steven R. Thorp, PhD, ABPP

[View the recorded webinar](#)

[View the webinar slides](#)

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools have been applied to business for several years, and in this webinar, Dr. Thorp will briefly describe AI, including potential benefits and points of caution. Participants will learn the policy of APA journals about AI, which can inform how instructors approach the tools. Participants will also learn novel ways in which AI could be used in coursework, preparing for licensure exams, learning academic and grant writing skills, teaching, and research. AI is already impacting the practice of psychotherapy, and some considerations about that use will be discussed. The webinar will include some examples to illustrate the use of AI tools, as well as specific apps that utilize AI.



Announcements: Who's Reading Them?

By Melissa Vervinck, D.E.T.

Clear and timely communication is essential in online teaching, and the Announcement feature in Canvas is an effective tool for sharing updates, deadlines, and valuable information with your students. [The Online Course Teaching Checklist](#), provided at the start of each term in the Pre-Course Information email, recommends creating an introductory announcement and posting weekly updates. Tracking whether students read announcements is challenging because of Canvas's notification system and the varied ways students access it, but the additional effort will pay off because students who engage with announcements tend to stay on track and perform better.

There is no single way to ensure students engage with the announcements in your course. Outlined below are four effective methods for instructors to promote and monitor student engagement with Canvas Announcements, along with the advantages and potential disadvantages of each strategy:

1. Display Announcements on the Course Home Page

- Go to your course in Canvas.
- Click **Settings** in the course navigation menu.
- In the **Course Details** tab, scroll to **Show recent announcements on Course home page**.
- Select the number of announcements to display (1 to 15). Online Learning recommends displaying three or fewer announcements.
- Click **Update Course Details** to save, located at the bottom of the page.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Ensures important updates are immediately visible to students, increasing their chances of being noticed.	Some students may skip the home page, especially on mobile devices.
Helps keep course communication organized and accessible.	Displaying too many announcements can clutter the home page and distract from other content.

Note: Beginning in August 2025 Term / Fall Semester / Fall Trimester, all online courses will be set to display information for the three most recent announcements on the course homepage.

2. Remind Students to Set Up Email Notifications for Announcements

- Ask students to log in to Canvas and click their profile picture or name to access account settings.
- Select **Notifications** from the menu.
- In the **Course Activities** section, find the **Announcements** row.
- Click the icon in the **Email** column next to "Announcements" to set their notification preference to either **Notify Immediately** or **Daily Summary**.
- Canvas saves changes automatically, ensuring students receive announcements via email based on their chosen frequency.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Delivers announcements directly to students' inboxes, increasing timely reading.	Emails may be overlooked in a crowded inbox
Allow students to customize notification frequency to suit their preferences.	Some students may disable notifications or choose less frequent updates.

3. Encourage Engagement Through Announcement Replies or Likes

- Enable announcement commenting or likes when creating an announcement.
- When creating an announcement, scroll to **Options**
 - For comments, select **Allow Participants to Comment**
 - For likes, select **Allow liking**
 - Changes will be saved when you **Publish** the announcement.
- Include a prompt or question in your announcements to encourage responses.
- Monitor replies or likes as signs of engagement and opportunities for discussion.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Enables interaction and feedback	May be read by many individuals, but some may opt not to engage, potentially resulting in underrepresented engagement data
Shows which students are engaging with course updates	Announcements aren't designed for extended discussions; replies may be limited.

4. Use Canvas New Analytics for Engagement Insights

- Access **New Analytics** in your Canvas course, located in the Course Navigation menu.
- Review **Weekly Online Activity** to review the number of students and page views for a specific resource
- To easily **identify specific announcements**, add emojis 📄 🖨️ 📧 or other identifying features to the title
- Remember, students may read announcements via email, so analytics **provide only an estimate**.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Provides a broad overview of student engagement trends to help identify students who may be falling behind	Does not track announcement-specific views, limiting accuracy.
Supports proactive intervention and personalized communication.	Students reading announcements via email or mobile won't appear engaged in analytics.

Conclusion

Canvas does not provide a perfect way to track exactly who reads announcements. However, you can improve student engagement by combining the strategies suggested here and choosing what will work best for you.

We would love to feature your tips! How do you encourage students to read and engage with your announcements? Please share your strategies with us at Onlinelearningstaff@alliant.edu and may be featured in an upcoming article.

Teaching Tips



Challenges for International Students and Suggested Teaching Strategies

Below is a list of some of the academic, social, and practical challenges facing international students, as well as suggested pedagogical approaches for addressing these needs.

- **Course policies.** International students may not be familiar with policies that are common in US courses.
 - Clarify your expectations regarding class policies such as attendance, assignment submission deadlines, and promptness to class
 - Specify and explain other policies such as use of generative AI, collaboration, and academic integrity
- **Academic standards/expectations.** International students may be used to different standards for their work.

- Provide examples of successful work on tests and papers
- Provide rubrics for written and oral work of all kinds
- **Presentation of course material.** International students may have difficulty understanding and processing the material being presented by the instructor.
 - Provide an agenda or outline for each class
 - Begin with a brief recap of the previous class, use clear transitions between topics, and end with a summary
 - Use and post PowerPoint slides
 - Use the principles of Universal Design for Learning by presenting information in multiple formats.
 - Use visual aids such as pictures, diagrams, and videos
 - Organize material with bullet points, numbering, and highlighting
 - Use active learning techniques to ensure that everyone is engaged
 - Give students regular opportunities to ask questions in class
 - Solicit feedback to determine whether all students have understood the points you have made
- **Terminology.** International students may not be familiar with terms that are uniquely American or refer to American cultural concepts or history.
 - Avoid using slang, jargon, or acronyms
 - Explain cultural or historical references that come up
- **Discussions and class participation.** International students may not be familiar with the kinds of dialogues and discussions often used in courses.
 - Explain purpose and expectations for class participation, including providing a rubric
 - Provide examples of the kinds of questions and comments that are most useful contributions to class discussions
 - Provide opportunities for students to contribute in other ways besides oral participation (e.g., posts on Canvas discussion board)
 - Use pre-discussion writing opportunities to help students organize their thinking and make them feel prepared before a discussion
 - Wait long enough after asking a question to allow students to formulate their thoughts.
- **Group work.** International students may not be familiar with working in groups in academic settings.
 - Assign group memberships, roles, and responsibilities and rotate them among students
 - Provide clear expectations regarding process and product
- **Writing.** Some forms of writing, and they may “write with an accent”.
 - Explain the purpose of each writing assignment
 - Provide specific rubrics and guidelines
 - Show examples of good work
 - Focus on content, ideas, and organization of papers
 - Provide feedback on patterns of errors rather than focusing on each individual error
- **Assessments.** International students may be unfamiliar with some forms of assessment or find their wording confusing.
 - Provide examples of types of questions to be used and opportunities for practice
 - Write assessment prompts that are clear and easily understood
- **Plagiarism and academic integrity.** International students may have a different understanding of plagiarism and the use of other people’s words and ideas; they may have learned different rules about copying other people’s work.
 - Explain relevant ethical principles
 - Give examples of what is and is not acceptable (e.g., paraphrasing and quoting)
 - Teach about using and citing references
 - Provide or give referrals to trainings on avoiding plagiarism
 - Refer to school academic integrity policies
 - Promulgate a policy regarding use of Generative AI in the course
- **Volume of reading.** International students are sometimes overwhelmed by the amount of

reading assigned because it often takes them longer to complete the readings.

- Help students prioritize readings
- Disseminate study questions to help students focus on important parts of reading assignments
- Provide a list of important concepts with definitions, highlighting key information to learn (i.e., study guide)
- Provide reading assignments well ahead of time
- **Class environment.** International students may feel isolated and out of touch with the rest of the students in the class.
 - Build community among students in class (e.g., use icebreakers)
 - Encourage informal conversation among small groups of students
 - Utilize online tools to stimulate student exchanges (e.g., chatrooms and blogs)
- **Contact With instructor.** International students may not be used to having individual contact with an instructor in class and in office hours.
 - Be proactive in relating to international students (e.g., reach out to them and hold informal conversation to build rapport and trust)
 - Learn something about students' backgrounds and how to pronounce their names
 - Emphasize the importance of office hours, explicitly invite students to attend (or even require attendance), and give examples of topics that can be discussed
- **Feedback.** International students need regular, clear, and specific feedback to help them improve their skills.
 - Give both written and oral feedback
 - Give feedback that is constructive and includes specific suggestions for how to improve
 - Provide positive comments to encourage successful behaviors
- **Well-being.** Adjusting to a new social and academic setting can be cognitively and emotionally taxing for international students
 - Acknowledge sources of stress such as differing cultural values and perspectives; difficulty understanding how institutions work; and personal or familial expectations
 - Provide information on available student and academic services
 - Recommend and normalize use of services

For more information, please see [International Students](#).

Other Resources



[AI to the Rescue](#)

This *Chronicle of Higher Education* article by Beth McMurtrie is based on information from surveys, focus groups, and interviews with college students. The author described how some students use AI to help them study and do schoolwork and the changing relationship of students to instructors and learning. “A theme running through students’ commentary, as they described their AI use, was the idea of technology as an aid and tutor. It can keep them on track, streamline the ‘fluff’ in their assignments, compensate for mediocre teaching or unavailable instructors, and help them juggle a busy schedule.” Furthermore, research on students’ use of AI found students often come to class less prepared, choosing to rely on AI summaries instead of doing the readings. Rather than talk in class, ask questions of the instructor or classmates, or attend office hours, they turn to AI for elaborations, clarifications, and explanations. They study for tests and exams by gathering material from various sources (e.g., lecture notes, AI summaries, slides) and uploading them into AI to create a plan, using AI as a tutor and study guide. To date, instructors have focused on AI use as a source of academic dishonesty; going forward, they will need to become more knowledgeable about these other uses and their implications for teaching and learning.

Shared Resources



[Using AI Right Now: A Quick Guide](#)

According to Ethan Mollick, the author of this Substack, people who want to use AI should choose one of three systems: Claude from Anthropic, Google's Gemini, and OpenAI's ChatGPT. He provides a chart comparing these three systems on several dimensions. He also has sections on Using Deep Research to produce high quality reports, Working with an AI, and Troubleshooting. He emphasizes the importance of knowing which features are available and how to use them.

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