



The Plot Thickens: Spark Student Engagement in Course Activities and Assignments

Focus on Teaching and Learning 🔥 Spark Up Your Syllabus

April 14, 2023

Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence

Institutional Effectiveness



Session Outcomes

Through the panel and session activities:

- Learn from colleagues and consider the value of, and strategies for, aligning course learning objectives you author with your teaching and learning activities.
- Draft ideas for clearly communicating to students the “what,” “how,” and “why” of learning throughout your course.
- Help students make connections between assignments and the course, curriculum, and world they live in.

Our Panel

- ❖ **Katie Cadwell**
Associate Teaching
Professor and Chemical
Engineering Undergraduate
Program Director
College of Engineering and
Computer Science



- ❖ **Megan Oakleaf**
Professor and Library
and Information Science
MS Program Director
School of Information
Studies



- ❖ **Amy Schmidt**
Citizenship and Civic
Engagement Program
Coordinator
Maxwell School of
Citizenship and Public
Affairs



Panelist questions:

- ❖ What motivated you to make changes in your course materials? What teaching and learning desires were you addressing?
- ❖ What did the process involve? For example, how did you decide where to begin? What steps did you take? What challenges did you face?
- ❖ How did students respond? Have you seen preliminary changes in learning?
- ❖ What's next?

Transparency in Learning and Teaching

Purpose

- ❖ Skills practiced
- ❖ Knowledge gained or demonstrated
- ❖ Real-life relevance beyond the course

Task

- ❖ How to do the assignment
- ❖ Steps to follow
- ❖ What to avoid
- ❖ Most useful resources and how to use them

Criteria

- ❖ How the assignment will be graded. Might include:
 1. checklist or rubric to guide students
 2. samples where students practice applying assignment criteria

<https://tilthighered.com/> TILT Examples & Resources

Your application “assignment” in this workshop (15 minutes individual and 10-15 minutes in group)

Purpose

- ❖ Reflect on what you learned from the panelists.
- ❖ Connect ideas to enhance learning in a course you teach.
- ❖ Choose something to make teaching ‘smarter, not harder.’

Task

- ❖ Look through your panelist notes or just think about what you heard.
- ❖ Choose an idea for piquing student motivation and communicating transparently.
- ❖ State 1-2 small changes you can implement, and list next steps.
- ❖ Today, avoid trying to change the curriculum or things outside your control. Note the big ideas for later.
- ❖ Share your idea with your small group.

Criteria

- ❖ Get group feedback on your idea: Feasibility, relevance to your context, appropriate next steps, time management tips, ideas for inspiring colleagues.
- ❖ Each group share one idea to whole group.

Resources shared during the session (1/2)

❖ Calling on Students

- Does the practice help students learn or just make them anxious? It all depends <https://www.chronicle.com/article/the-question-of-cold-calling>
- Leveling the Playing Field: How Cold-Calling Affects Class Discussion Gender Equity <https://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/jel/article/view/0/38590>

❖ Transparency in Teaching and Learning

<https://tilthighered.com/>

On the website go to TILT EXAMPLES & RESOURCES tile:

- There are brief video introductions (4 videos, each under 1 minute)
- Example assignments – faculty share assignments before and after revising them for transparency.
- Tools – See Transparent Assignment Design Template

Resources shared during the session (2/2)

❖ **Planning for Student Reflection:**

Closing the semester with opportunities for students to reflect on their growth.

https://higheredpraxis.substack.com/p/tip-planning-for-student-reflection?utm_source=post-email-title&publication_id=33051&post_id=112914651&isFreemail=true&utm_medium=email

❖ **Exam Wrapper**

<https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/design/teach/examwrappers/>

❖ iSchool is focusing their curriculum on **Information Justice, Equity, and Community Engagement**

<https://ischool.syr.edu/new-faculty-leadership-appointments/>

<https://ischool.syr.edu/academics/library-and-information-science-masters-degree/>

Wrap-up

- ❖ Share one thing from your group. It might be a technique, a plan, or a theme that emerged in your discussion, etc.
- ❖ Please complete the workshop feedback form now, if possible.



Thank you for joining us!

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