

## Lessons Learned from Fall 2020:

A compilation of suggestions from faculty responding to the TLC Student Survey Results

*While students were very appreciative of all that faculty are doing during this trying time, this document will address only the areas where improvements might be possible.*

### Communication

"I respond to every email within 2 hours if received during daytime hours. This means I might only reply saying that their email was received and that I will respond more when I can."

"I post a weekly update of assignments, due dates, and an overview of the week by 8:00am every Monday."

"I am thinking about doing an automatic response in my email, so students know immediately that I received their emails."

"I think it is helpful to state on the syllabus what the expectations are for communicating by email."

### Connection

"I provide students an outline of what office hours are for, about, and what to expect; I'm surprised that many students didn't know what they were for."

I tried to do open office hours and ended up just sitting there with no one showing up. I sent a note to my students and advisees letting them know that I was bored and needing connection with them and the Zoom office hours really picked up! I think students were afraid to bother me."

"(I am using) Microsoft Teams in their courses.... I use it for small group discussions. The students are just sharing their take-aways from this semester and many of them are sharing (with me) that discussions on Teams have helped them connect with each other and the material."

"I used groups for all of my classes and my students rotated responsibility for hosting ZOOM meetings for their teams. I found using synchronous sessions during class time and having the students share the ZOOM links with me worked really well to create group identity and solidarity."

### STUDENT CONCERNS:

**Student issues seemed to center around these main areas:**

#### Communication

students felt that communication with faculty is difficult or non-existent

**Connection** – students did not feel connected to students or their colleagues

**Assignments** – students felt as if faculty were over-compensating for distance teaching by increasing workload

**Flexibility** – students wanted more flexibility in deadlines, etc.

#### Course Organization

students felt that courses were unorganized, and information was difficult to find

“Students have seemed to enjoy my candid, often lightweight, mini-videos of me at a field site, in the lab, etc. I think they enjoy the change of scenery and that the content isn’t so formal.”

“I, mid-week, post silly cartoon or picture for levity. Students commented on how they look forward to this.”  
“Sometimes I send out an email to the class with something like, “Whatcha having for dinner tonight? It’s pasta and salad here.” It’s silly, but I’m always surprised how many students respond, they seem happy to talk about something not related to class.”

“During Zoom break-out rooms, I make sure to visit each room so I can chat with the smaller number of students. The connection is so much easier and authentic this way.”

## Assignments/Flexibility

“I have all but thrown out due dates this semester. So many students are struggling to make the dates that it was impossible to keep up. Now I have a suggested due date that I hope most of the students keep but if assignments are received later, I don’t dock points.”

“I tell students that they can turn things in late, but they have to email me and let me know. This serves as an opportunity to open conversation with the student.”

“I have all of my assignments due at the same time (Sunday at 11:59pm). Students have said that they really appreciate the continuity.”

“This semester I have built in that students can skip 2 assignments or quizzes with no repercussions.”

“I have learned that, with assignments, I can’t replicate a fully on-campus experience. Next semester I am going to have fewer higher-stakes assignments than weekly work due. Students seem overwhelmed with weekly assignments and quizzes.”

“I’m planning on adding a few current events assignments. Easy way to accumulate points, and helps students make connections between (the discipline) and what is happening around the country and world.”

“My students said that asynchronous courses helps them balance school and work/family responsibilities”.

“I check in with the class every few weeks and we re-visit the syllabus to ensure that upcoming exam and assignment dates are appropriate and realistic with all that is going on right now. They appreciate this.”

“I, occasionally, remind the students of the expected number of hours that the course might require. Sometimes I think this escapes them.”

**NOTE:** From **Cult of Pedagogy**, it is suggested that during this stressful time of Covid, content needs to be ‘simplified and slowed down’. Take a look at [cultofpedagogy.com](http://cultofpedagogy.com); it’s fabulous (D. Guelda).

## Course organization

“This may be silly but might help someone. On D2L, I set up all my folders (on the left side of the screen) with these topics: Syllabus, Course videos, Powerpoint lectures, and Assignments. Each of these is subdivided into the information for each exam (Course videos for Exam I, Course videos for Exam II, etc.).”

“It’s hard to know exactly what I am going to do throughout the whole semester as I am just now developing the course (and now online!). I provide a general outline with dates, etc. and then weekly provide more information about the actual assignments. I also have points set aside for yet-to-be-determined assignments, quizzes, etc. These are also on the syllabus.”

“I post a weekly update of assignments, due dates, and an overview of the week by 8:00am every Monday.”



### ***eLearning support comes to the rescue again!***

Please see attached the following documents that will help you help your students:

1. Full Composite Rubric with Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced standards for course design.
2. What Works Well in Online Teaching
3. Dates tutorial

The above resources, and more!, can be found at the NEW teaching resource page found at the following link: <https://www.bemidjistate.edu/academics/distance/elearning/course-design/> This page is wonderful!!



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