

Dear Colleagues:

We are aware that many students continue to feel stressed, anxious, isolated, and unmotivated in the present conditions. We are also very aware that faculty is experiencing these as well. To assist in trying to mitigate these challenges, we decided to share some approaches that have shown to work as instructional strategies during this pandemic. As you prepare your spring courses, please consider using some of the following approaches to improve the learning experience for students:

1. Prioritize Connection and Engagement Opportunities:

Fostering connection and engagement in your classes is priceless. Some ways you can do this:

- a. Host a “get to know the professor” synchronous session in the first week of class. Use this time to go over the syllabus, clarify assignments, and let your students see you as a real person. Follow this up with a midpoint and end-of-semester online check-in with your students, where you ask how things are going, clarify assignments, etc. Record these sessions and share the links with students who cannot attend.
- b. Let your students know that you are available to talk. Several ways this can be very effective include:
 - i. Login 15 minutes early or stay 15 minutes after class.
 - ii. Set a regular time to connect as an online study session or student hours or Google chat room.
 - iii. Communicate often your availability and your preferred method of reaching out to you.
- c. Weekly announcements are a powerful way to guide students and help them feel connected to the course throughout the semester, especially those who are new to online learning and need the reminders they would receive verbally in on-campus classes. [Learn more about creating effective announcements.](#)

2. Articulate Student Work Expectations:

Communication is key to success and to a positive experience. Some suggestions include:

- a. Clarify what is expected to prepare for all graded assignments, discussions, projects and exams in your syllabus multiple times during the semester as they are due.
- b. Remind them what academic integrity means in your course.
- c. Allow students to practice with learning tools in a low-stakes manner before they take a high-stakes graded assignment. For example, if you use Respondus Monitor for exams, give a practice quiz first and give students credit for participating.
- d. Group work can be challenging for students to organize when they are fully remote. In advance of group projects, reach out to students and make sure they are connecting with each other and organizing their collective work.

3. Continue to be [empathetic](#) and flexible:

Often the smallest gestures can make the biggest impact. Students have reported feeling awkward about reaching out to faculty to ask questions. If you email students about an assignment, simply adding “reach out if you have questions,” can be a huge help.

- a. Give students the benefit of the doubt; if they email you in the middle of an exam and report technical difficulties (e.g., their Internet stopped working, the quiz froze, etc.), give them another opportunity to do the work.
- b. Sometimes, a one-day extension means everything to a student who is having a particularly stressful week. Give a grace period for a missed quiz or assignment whenever possible. See [DELTA Faculty Fellows Share Ways to Plan Breaks for Students this Spring](#) for more information.
- c. [Be aware of and point students to resources](#) that can help them if they are struggling.
- d. A helpful guide prepared by students for students on. Variety of topics can be found here: (<https://dasa.ncsu.edu/step-by-step-help-topics/>)

If you need assistance in implementing these ideas, or want to discuss other strategies, the Office of Faculty Development and DELTA both offer one-on-one consultations. Consultations can be *very* helpful for fine-tuning your online classes to the benefit of both you and your students. [Here](#) is the link for requesting a consultation with OFD and [here](#) with DELTA.

January [DELTA workshops](#) may also be helpful.

- Helping Students Get Started in an Online Class (1/8 at 1pm)
- Leveraging Zoom Tools to Facilitate Engagement (1/14 at 9am)
- Tips for Increasing Engagement in Moodle (1/19 at 2pm)
- Engagement in Synchronous & Asynchronous Classrooms (1/26 at 1pm)
- And see more recorded workshops in the [Student Engagement](#) category

Finally, see these articles for additional advice from fellow faculty and DELTA colleagues.

- [10 Tips to Prepare Your Students for a Successful Spring](#)
 - [College During COVID-19: DELTA's Tips For Teaching In 2021](#)
 - [Are we doing enough to engage our online students?](#)
 - [Building Community Through Peer Engagement Online](#)
 - [Tips for Engaging Your Students, from DELTA instructional Designers](#)
 - [Fostering Deeper Discussions Using Zoom](#)
 - [All of our Tips for Teaching and Working Remotely](#)
 - [Pack Hacks for Faculty Compassion and Understanding in Online Teaching](#)
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