Quick Tips for Online Teaching with Flower Darby

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by David Trinh, the School of Information Technology Administration and Security

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Flower Darby was our keynote speaker in the *Teaching & Learning Day Fall 2020* which focused on student engagement, learning, and assessment in online classes.

The keynote presentation was recorded: "Small Teaching Online: Improving Student Engagement, Learning, and Assessment" by Flower Darby.

The schools of Software Design and Data Science (SDDS) and Information Technology Administration and Security (ITAS) were treated to a special visit from Flower. During Flower's visit, she provided concrete examples on how to manage common challenges with teaching online such as student engagement, assessments, and HyFlex course delivery.

Student Engagement
When teaching online, how do we encourage students to participate?
One strategy to encourage discussions and participation is called "Tepid calling" or "Warm calling." During class, specific students are made aware they need to share their thoughts on a topic. This gives them time to gather their thoughts before sharing with the class. It creates accountability for the students and provides a safe opportunity for them to share.

Another strategy Flower provided is a class worksheet or assessment which students need to complete and submit at the end of class. The worksheet could include activities which students discuss in small breakout group during class. The worksheet could have questions to answer, spots to make notes about topics, or possibly fill in missing information.

Lastly, to foster an open communication environment, Flower recommends we give positive and supportive responses to any student questions or comments. While there may be some comments that are challenging or are even inappropriate, we should try to frame our reactions in a positive manner. Combining this with calling students by their name will foster a positive learning environment for students.

Assessments
What are some ways to minimize cheating in online classes?
Flower suggests several strategies for minimizing cheating, including lower weight and increased frequency of assessments, creating more complex questions, and offering video demonstrations.

Traditional assessments like final exams are typically weighted higher than the rest of the assessments throughout the semester. The higher the weight of an assessment, the more likely a student will attempt to cheat because of the importance of that single assessment. Dividing a single assessment into multiple, smaller-weighted assessments can alleviate the chances of academic integrity violations by reducing the students' stress levels.

When developing assessments for online classes, consider the complexity of the questions. Try developing case study-based questions which may require the students to draw upon their personal experiences or situation. Here is an example: "Explain and provide details on how your home computer network is configured." These types of questions encourage students to reflect on their environment and increase the likelihood of a unique response.

In situations where students need to demonstrate a skill or present knowledge, Flower suggests leveraging video recording technology. Specific demonstrations can be recorded and shared for grading while other demonstrations may require a synchronous meeting with the student. While a synchronous meeting with each student can be time intensive, the students are being evaluated during the meeting which includes the grading effort.

HyFlex
What are your recommendations for teaching in a HyFlex course?
Flower states this is the most challenging way of teaching a class due to the complexity of managing the constantly changing in-person and online audience. While HyFlex does provide students with flexibility in attending class, it does require a higher level of student maturity.

When developing a HyFlex course, consider it asynchronous. This means most materials are available within the learning management system. The engagement with students (both in-class and online) requires the instructor to make a conscience effort in addressing the different audiences which becomes easier with practice.

Brian Beatty discusses HyFlex in more detail in "Hybrid-Flexible Course Design."

View the June 2021 issue of the Academic Newsletter.

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